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**A Critical Analysis of Karl Jaspers' Cipher Theory of Transcendence: and its  
relevance to the relationship between science and religion.**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for  
the degree of Master of Philosophy by Andrew Neal Hunt.

11<sup>th</sup> July 2007

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## ABSTRACT

The central claim of the thesis is that the thought of the German existentialist Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) articulates a significant approach to the epistemological problems posed by the question of Transcendence. It is arguably a philosophy of special relevance to the ongoing and often competing discourse about existence adumbrated in the 'science and religion' debate. The thesis sets out the key themes of Jaspers that are relevant to the special issues that surround the problem of Transcendence, before critically presenting two contrasting and variant solutions to the philosophical difficulties it poses. An elaboration of Jaspers' cipher theory of Transcendence is believed to be an improvement upon these methodological approaches, is critically outlined as a strategy, and further evaluated against another competing epistemology, that of inference based explanation. The thesis argues that with appropriate qualifications Jaspers provides a compelling account of the human engagement of Transcendence through their otherwise ordinary activity.



*For my parents:-*

*Chris and Carolyn*

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## INTRODUCTION

What is there?<sup>1</sup>

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), the German existentialist philosopher and psychiatrist provides an exceptionally vivid answer to this central philosophical question. Jaspers' intellectual output comprised thirty influential books encircling psychiatry, theology and existentialist philosophy. As an instigator of existentialism Jaspers' *Philosophy* was published in 1932 making a seminal contribution to the history of thought. Existentialist philosophers stress the significance of personal experience and individuality in settling the difficult questions about life and truth. A central conviction of existentialism is that that there are aspects of life that can only be adequately fathomed by the individual who is deeply committed and involved with the personal experience of existence. As Jaspers said in his 1955 Epilogue to the third German edition of *Philosophy*, 'What has become universally effective in the world is not the sole yardstick of truth'.<sup>2</sup> The depths seemingly beyond what is universally effective are conjectured by existential thought to be denied to detached, objective or disinterested observers. Jaspers' *Philosophy* expounds the existentialist critique of knowledge and offers a dramatic and fascinating answer to the central philosophical question: 'what is there?'<sup>3</sup>

Jaspers' other key philosophical arguments in texts such as *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, *Reason and Existenz* and *Philosophy of Existence* continually explore the scope and nature and limits of different kinds of experience. Enfolded in his philosophical concerns is invariably a preoccupation with the special problems posed by the question of Transcendence. What is Transcendence? Transcendence is classically

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<sup>1</sup> E. Craig, *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 1.

<sup>2</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 36.

<sup>3</sup> Although Jaspers was somewhat unenthusiastic about being termed an 'existentialist', he undeniably starts his thinking from invariably subjective concerns (See A. C. Thiselton, 2002, 150). The reader might like to note that Jaspers therefore begins *Philosophy* with the characteristic existential assertion: 'Philosophy Starts with Our Situation', opening his account: 'I do not begin at the beginning when I ask questions such as "What is being?" or "Why is anything at all? Why not nothing?" or "Who am I?" or "What do I really want?" These questions arise from a *situation* in which, coming from a past, I find myself. When I become aware of myself I see that I am in a world in which I take my bearings' (See K. Jaspers, 1969, 43).

defined as ‘an attribute of being above and independent of the universe’.<sup>4</sup> That which is ‘Transcendent’ has the additional meaning of referring to the ‘Deity: In His being, exalted above and distinct from the universe’.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, for Jaspers, Transcendence refers to that which is absolute and totally unqualified, in short, to the notion of God.<sup>6</sup> As he comments in *Philosophy*, Transcendence is ‘beyond all form. We ascertain the philosophical idea of God as thinking fails us, and what we grasp in this failure is *that* there is a deity, not *what* it is’.<sup>7</sup> As thinking fails, experience does not, it is alleged to somehow continue, and Jaspers directs his philosophical disciples into an altogether different orbit to what he saw as the damaging tendency to equate truth and knowledge with impartial, ‘neutral’ objectivity.

Two distinguishable objectives are intended in the thesis title. In the first place, that Jaspers’ philosophical thought provides an intriguing and appealing answer to the special problems posed by the question of Transcendence, and that his distinctive contribution to this specific area of human understanding needs to be critically evaluated and applied. In this regard, Jaspers’ ideas will be evaluated against the backdrop of two markedly different approaches to the question of Transcendence, those of the German Jesuit Karl Rahner (1904-1984), perhaps the leading Roman Catholic theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Canadian Jesuit and polymath Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). Why is the evaluation a significant task? It is significant because it will be argued that Jaspers offers a qualified improvement on what will later be termed these ‘epistemological approaches’ to Transcendence. Both Rahner and Lonergan advance exceptionally dense and theoretically driven propositions purporting to establish the presence of a transcendent reality to ordinary human activity. Both are formidable and forcibly technical systems of thought with very different philosophical commitments to Jaspers, whose theory of ciphers

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<sup>4</sup> W. Little *et al.*, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Volume I and II, (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), 2345. Hereafter *SOED*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2345.

<sup>6</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for ‘Jaspers, Karl’, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, (London: Routledge, 1998), 81. Transcendence is capitalised throughout the thesis as a technical term that receives ongoing clarification. The reader might also note that the use of the word ‘Being’, also capitalised for the same reason, has a degree of equivalence with Transcendence, and is used interchangeably with it. Both terms will be clarified and extended in Chapter One. *En passant*, (fn...) or (p...) refer the reader to a footnote or page of relevance to the point under discussion.

<sup>7</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 35.

provides a significantly more accessible and intuitive explanation as to how this alleged depth and significance can be encountered.

In the second place, as suggested, Jaspers' philosophical theory adumbrated often at the obscure boundaries of scientific knowledge claims to somehow manifest an experience of Transcendence *beyond* these limits. It is therefore directly relevant to the present relationship between what recent linguistic convention has termed the 'science and religion debate'. In this regard the inference based strategy of the biochemist Arthur Peacocke (1924-2006) will also serve to juxtapose the novelty and relevance of Jaspers' philosophy. Why is it a contrast worthy of sustained attention? Arguably because Jaspers' experiential approach to what might be termed 'possible' Transcendence can compose a significant contribution to understanding the relationship between science and religion that has generated a sophisticated and complex literature in recent years. An adequate understanding of Jaspers' thought provides an important philosophical depth and imperative to this scientific enterprise, and one that is, again, at a sharp variance to the inner logic of the inference based epistemology advocated by Peacocke. It will be argued that Peacocke's strategy of inferring a transcendent depth to existence solely on the basis of a scientific assessment of reality, of 'what is there', is inconsistent with the very notion of Transcendence as Jaspers understands it.

To point toward these inconsistencies remains a crucial task in a world increasingly dominated by the natural sciences, which Jaspers esteemed, but, critically, without overestimating the explanatory prowess of the scientific method. As Jaspers in his time argued:

The distinction between science and philosophy has never had to be more sharply drawn and has never before been so urgently needed in the interests of truth today, when scientific superstition flourishes and philosophy seems lost.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman: A Short Course in Philosophical Thinking*, (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 10.

What is there? To ask the question *presupposes* that there is something. The apparent reality of the world is present to us in practice and that to which we listen for answers to questions about the nature of existence.<sup>9</sup> Since the dawn of modern science in the seventeenth century and the development of a significant faith in the power of human reason, science has provided arguably the most successful response to the question.<sup>10</sup> In its Enlightenment vision and project, modern science has engaged existence with the conviction that it is fundamentally rational and intelligible. What is science? The word ‘science’, derived from the Latin word, *scientia*, itself from *scire*, “to know”, often denotes the knowledge of objects that have been systematised and related to other pieces of knowledge about other physical facts of verified sense experience (and sometimes non-physical ‘facts’ in the case of electrons and abstract elements of theoretical physics). With typical luminous clarity Jaspers referred to the progress of science as the ‘*methodical conquest of endlessness*’,<sup>11</sup> a disciplined and meticulous discovery of the real world. Why is science important for Jaspers? It is important because:

The sciences can neither vindicate philosophy nor produce it as their result. Philosophy antedates them all, and in the grandiose figures of Antiquity it managed to exist without them. Still, since their development they have constituted the inevitable field of orientation for any philosophy that cares about truthful thinking. To philosophize today, a man must know the profound satisfaction of scientific insight.<sup>12</sup>

With this insight, and in order to effectively locate Jaspers’ significance, in the subsection immediately to follow the *first* of two fundamental insights will be established.<sup>13</sup> To begin with time will be given to considering this ‘conquest of endlessness’, a process of

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<sup>9</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 74.

<sup>10</sup> M. Midgley, *Science and Poetry*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

<sup>11</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> The reader might like to note that the literature sub-serving the immediate, preliminary argument will be drawn from contemporary sources that support and contextualize the *two fundamental insights* composed in the Introduction. Namely those thinkers that will help the reader consider the human relation to (i) an objective physical environment, discussed immanently. Following these initial bearings, thinkers who lend credence to the existentialist claim that (ii) experience is a deep and fundamental source of information about the world, about ‘what is there’, that is often at odds with what can be stated objectively. These are the two foundations to be addressed in this introductory chapter.

coming to know *something*, typified, and given axiomatic epistemic value and coherence in the scientific presentation of an objective world. Jaspers launches his philosophical system of thought from this apparently well-rounded sense of physical reality.

## 1. WORLD ORIENTATION (i): OBJECT KNOWLEDGE

In view of the undecided and open ended reality that besets human life and compels the question 'what is there', 'I would like' as Jaspers reasonably said 'an answer that will give me *support*'.<sup>14</sup> Whenever human life thinks about the reality in which it has emerged, it invariably intends an object like a stone or a stick, another animal, or a tree.<sup>15</sup> 'To be', to exist as a person, appears to mean being in a conscious relationship with something else,<sup>16</sup> and that something else appears first and foremost, as a world of objects.<sup>17</sup> Hence one of the most important features of conscious human experience is that it is termed intentional.<sup>18</sup> The use of the word 'intentionality', in the present terms of reference, is traceable to medieval times from the Latin *intendo*: it means to point at or extend towards something. Intentional phenomena occur in relation to something hence mental states are invariably directed at or referring to or generally about objects and states of affairs in the world.<sup>19</sup> What is there? There is a sense of reference in which the person naturally relates to the existence of objects around them.<sup>20</sup> In these terms the human being asking questions about existence always finds their answers 'out there' so to speak,<sup>21</sup> in an objective world they can discover.

Stability and constancy in the physical world is recognised and names are attributed to the plethora of phenomena encountered by conscious human beings. It occurs precisely

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<sup>14</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 43.

<sup>15</sup> K. Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, Translated by R. Manheim, (Archon Books, 1968), 148-149.

<sup>16</sup> J. Russell, *Agency: Its Role in Mental Development*, (East Sussex: Erlbaum (UK) Taylor & Francis, 1996), 74.

<sup>17</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 49.

<sup>18</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, (London: Phoenix, 2000), 73-80.

<sup>19</sup> J. Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), 14.

<sup>20</sup> A. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*, (London: Vintage, 2003), 184.

<sup>21</sup> A. Grøn, 'The Embodied Self, Reformulating the Existential Difference in Kierkegaard', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 10-11, 2004, 27. Hereafter *JCS*.

through this process of *reification*. It follows that in the most immediate sense things that are “real”, in this active exploration, are invariably material things of ordinary size like the stones or sticks, other animals or trees, and fields and mountains and clouds.<sup>22</sup> As American linguist Noam Chomsky observed, when human rationality happens to comprehend anything at all, it is often called a *thing*,<sup>23</sup> it gets called “physical”.<sup>24</sup> Envisaging the reality of the world in these terms assumes that ‘the entities which we conjecture to be real should be able to exert causal effect upon the *prima facie* real things; that is, upon material things of ordinary size: that we can explain changes in the ordinary material world of things by the causal effects of entities conjectured to be real’.<sup>25</sup> It follows quite naturally, therefore, that the subject-object dichotomy is fundamental to asking questions about the world, the universe, about life,<sup>26</sup> and that once again, solid material things are the central paradigms of reality.<sup>27</sup>

From this general conception of practical reality as “thinghood”, realness is encountered in the large scale towards railway trains, mountains and stars, and regressively into the minutia of particles in the microscopic world, thus in attention to the primordial units, realness is also extended to liquids, air, gases and finally to molecules and atoms.<sup>28</sup> This brute, basic structure of human knowing grounds, in a simple form, the axiom that a person is conscious only in so far as they are conscious of something, and, reiteratively, to be conscious of myself is to be conscious of something other than myself.<sup>29</sup> There is always in what Jaspers terms this ‘object being’, an ‘endless variety and infinite

<sup>22</sup> K. Popper & J. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, (London: Springer International, 1977), 9.

<sup>23</sup> The somewhat ambiguous designate ‘thing’ is understood to ‘denote a unity, identity, whole; initially it is grasped in the data as individual; in as much as it unifies spatially and temporally distinct data, it is extended and permanent’. (See M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., 1997, 157). As Lonergan commented later on in his classic text *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding*, to be discussed in Chapter Two, ‘I have based the notion of the thing upon a grasp of unity and identity in data as individual; but though I am not aware that anyone else has expressed the matter in precisely this fashion, I would be prepared to contend that their spontaneous use of the notion of thing satisfied my account’ (See B. Lonergan, 1957, 738).

<sup>24</sup> J. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, (London: MIT Press, 1999), 25.

<sup>25</sup> K. Popper & J. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited: The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1971), 55.

<sup>27</sup> K. Popper & J. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 99.



abundance; it means the world I can get to know'.<sup>30</sup> Hence the process of coming to know the world is essentially a sequence of realising that I am a knower, that something else is, and that I am not that something.<sup>31</sup> It describes a fundamental dynamic to human existence.<sup>32</sup>

This is arguably the central epistemological force of the Enlightenment vision and its development into modern science of the present day. What is epistemology? Epistemology, from the Greek *episteme*, "knowledge", "theory", is the 'theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge'.<sup>33</sup> Epistemology studies the definition of knowledge, its potential sources and criteria, its certainty and limits, and the relation between the 'knower' and the 'known', or, the person and the world. The epistemology implicated above posits objects as a central paradigm in the human quest for knowledge in answer to question 'what is there?' As Jaspers argues in *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*:

How do we get to the object? By intending it and entering into relation with it, handling tangible objects, turning intellectual objects over and over in our minds. How does the object get to us? By our being bodily affected by it, by our grasping it as it presents itself to us, by our producing it as a thought structure which has cogency for us. Is the object there *per se*? We intend it as one which is there, and which we can get to. We call it a something, a thing, a fact, an object. But for us it is such as it appears. Because we are there, the object is such as it is.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> T. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan: An Introductory Guide to Insight*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 101-102.

<sup>32</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 13. In Jaspers' words, 'As any conceived being presupposes the being of a subject, the subject, as subject at large, *presupposes itself*' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 37).

<sup>33</sup> *SOED*, 671.

<sup>34</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 22-23. Elsewhere Jaspers comments: objectivity is 'first, *the object* confronting a subjective I. Objects are external, as distinct from the subject's internality. Externality is otherness; it means being alien to me, but also definite and clear...Objectivity not only makes the subject aware of itself. It also offers a challenge: objective is, second, what is *valid*, not unthought of in the blind mêlée of an existence' (See K. Jaspers, 1970, 297). Alternatively see his arguments that self consciousness and a consciousness of objects 'go together' (See K. Jaspers, 1969, 50). Hence the Jaspersian dictum: no object, no self (See S. Samay, 1971, 13).

The foregoing schematic, of subjects confronting real objects of interest, can be described as a *default position* in that it expresses the presupposition that there is a real world and that is that exists independently of experiences, thoughts and language. It is held pre-reflectively, as Jaspers suggests the object appears to be ‘there’ as one or more of the things that are intended and referred to, because to advance an argument that this kind of realism is not actually the case necessitates a conscious effort and significant and convincing arguments.<sup>35</sup> John Searle, the American philosopher of mind and language, summarises the default positions for sensible philosophy by arguing that there is indeed a real world to which perceptual access is possible, that words used to describe the world often have reasonably clear meanings and that statements are true or false depending on whether they accurately correspond to how things are in the world.<sup>36</sup>

This kind of basic direct realism is further composed of the subdivisions ‘mind-dependent’ and ‘mind-independent’ meaning. *Mind-independent* meaning are ‘things’ like hydrogen atoms, viruses, stones, trees, tectonic plates and galaxies; all existing independently of the human mind, before and probably after human life has expired. *Mind-dependent* meanings include money, property, marriage, sport, war, and depend on human deliberation and agreement for their existence.<sup>37</sup> In other words, there are those things taken to exist ‘out there’ irrespective of human deliberation, and there are other realities, perhaps social ones, which humans have generated in their engagement with life. This is the basic reality albeit often unreflectively adopted by any human being.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 9. J. Baggini and P. S. Fosl suggest that Searle’s argument is a derivative of the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s private language argument, i.e. that language is meaningful and predicated on accessible *shared* and therefore *public* meaning. (See J. Baggini & P. S. Fosl, 2003, 62).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14. *En passant*, even the construction of *social theories* is understood to require some kind of context in order to allow and account for a process of development, *somewhere* to build a theory from (See A. E. McGrath, 2002, 199).

<sup>38</sup> Why elect to cite the external realism of J. Searle? Arguably because it would be circular to state Jaspers’ own similar position on realism, as it is variously described in his commitment to clarifying what he saw as the limits of scientific knowledge. These limits, based on a realist view of existence will be conveyed in Chapter One. Further to that, Searle is an internationally recognised philosopher whose main contribution is his theory of *intentionality* in which the mind is argued to invariably have a clear intent towards an object, “I see *the tree*”, “I see, *the mountain*”, “I see *the stars*”. Here the epistemic adequacy of a given theory is dependent on the degree to which it adequately describes ‘what is there’. Statements are true if they correspond or ‘fit’ with how things *actually are* (See J. Searle, 2000, 13). See also R. Audi’s comments on true propositions correctly corresponding with reality. If a correspondence is demonstrable by the knowing

Once real physical objects have been accepted as actually present to human consciousness then it follows that other objects around them, say the continent on which the object rests, and then the planet and the several other planets and the sun that form the solar system, are also admitted as real.

This kind of direct realism takes reality as 'real' and real 'out there' so to speak, confronting the person and not as an abstraction of the human mind.<sup>39</sup> Fully extended, it is a commitment which ultimately includes the universe that 'englobes' the objects all the way though to the solar system, and beyond, that have been more or less understood by the Enlightenment project.<sup>40</sup> The application of science to the existence of the real world reveals it as a single functioning whole only subsequently broken down into abstracted parts for analysis and which is often found to be elegant in its evident laws, structured with huge complexity, and hence open to reasoned engagement throughout its spectrum.<sup>41</sup> This kind of 'realism' *per se* and its theoretical opponent, anti-realism, in its many forms constitutes a significant literature. The central idea of realism is that a person can viably answer the question 'what is there' in more or less direct relation to a real objective world that is independent of the knower and the way in which facts about the world are to be discovered. An antirealist position will deny this is possible with the same epistemological conviction.<sup>42</sup>

What justification is there for adopting a realist position as Jaspers seems to suggest people often unreflectively do in his earlier deliberation about the object (fn 34)? The

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process, such knowledge is normally taken to represent reality and on that basis is termed 'factual' (See R. Audi, 2003, 246-247). Despite these appeals to the referential capacity of knowing, a correspondence theory of truth is subject to ongoing argument. In this regard, R. Rorty's rejection of Searle's position is of note: essentially, that mind and language are so embedded *in* reality that the expectation of actually 'mapping' something as *independent of language* is fatally compromised (See R. Rorty, 1998, 63f). Against which, arguably stand J. W. van Huyssteen's comments that, nevertheless, a transactional conception of reality is maintainable because even without "pure" experience, 'it is indeed not language all the way down' (See J. W. van Huyssteen, 1999, 213). Please also see the 'Suggested Areas for Future Research' at the end of the thesis.

<sup>39</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, (Oxford: One World, 1998), 153.

<sup>40</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment*, (London: Sage, 2002), 10.

<sup>41</sup> K. Ward, *In Defence of the Soul*, (Oxford: One World, 1998), 154.

<sup>42</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Scientific Realism and Antirealism', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, (London: Routledge, 1998), 581.

intentional relationship to an objective physical environment was termed a default position above because it is part of what Searle argues is the cognitive background of the person.<sup>43</sup> By use of the word 'background' Searle suggests that any theorising about existence must come from *somewhere* and so these default positions are not simply 'theories', they are not 'purely' theoretical. Indeed any attempt even to argue or to compete for which description of reality is most aptly descriptive *presupposes* there is already a 'way' in which the world exists. An argumentative negation of external realism is fine, but it is dependent on external realism for its existence! In which case, external realism cannot, as noted, be a theory or an opinion. It is a presupposition of the way any such claims are to be understood.<sup>44</sup> Searle argues that basic human activity like hammering in a nail, going to a restaurant or taking a holiday takes for granted the realism of the world. If it is true that Greece is understood to be warmer than Scandinavia and a person plans a holiday and confirms through direct experience the difference in temperature then it follows that there is a reality independent of the statement.<sup>45</sup>

Realism in science similarly proposes that the many objects of the world that science aims to understand are similarly independent of the knowing mind.<sup>46</sup> Peacocke therefore advocates a theory of strong objectivity as it is adopted in the natural sciences, the recent intellectual history of which he holds to paradigmatically manifest the standards of what constitutes reliable knowledge.<sup>47</sup> His citation of J. Leplin is illustrative:

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<sup>43</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. Searle defends a realist position from various competing positions including perspectivism, scepticism, and arguments from relativity, and concludes his assessment that many counterarguments cannot displace a valid realist epistemology (See J. Searle, 2000, 31). In this regard, it is notable that most *anti-realists*, according to W. B. Drees, share the 'out there' assumption, so the argument is really about how *accurately* the world can be known, not whether it can be known (See W. B. Drees, 1998, 139).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. How do we know? We know because the way in which the 'world' is appears to effect how we are. In this regard see the recent exposition of realism made by M. S. Archer and colleagues (See M. S. Archer *et al.* 2004, 67). Clearly no one actually *lives* an antirealism!

<sup>46</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Scientific Realism and Antirealism', 581.

<sup>47</sup> A. Peacocke, *Theology for A Scientific Age: Being and Becoming – Natural, Divine and Human, Enlarged Edition*, (London: SCM Press, 1993), 9.

What realists do share in common are the convictions that scientific change is, on balance, progressive and that science makes possible knowledge of the world beyond its accessible, empirical manifestations.<sup>48</sup>

What kind of justification is there for appealing to scientific realism? One possible argument is to see that science would have been impossible without some form of congruence between knowing and the known, or the potentially knowable.<sup>49</sup> The alethic status of scientific advance appears to be built upon this apparent relationship to external reality.<sup>50</sup> In these terms to deny external realism is to make a mockery of the advance of science<sup>51</sup> and the evident practical sense in which, as M. Devitt suggests, a committed realism is derived from the habit of *nurture*,<sup>52</sup> of progressively and apparently successfully attending to the 'given'. With these basic insights it can reasonably be affirmed that here are preliminary grounds on which to engage the question 'what is there?' As Clark eloquently states, that there are stars, with their own properties, independent of us is as close to being an *axiom* as any commitment can be.<sup>53</sup> In this vein Searle anecdotally and sarcastically remarks:

I once debated a famous ethnomethodologist who claimed to have shown that astronomers actually create quasars and other astronomical phenomena through their researches and discourses. "Look," I said, "suppose you and I go for a walk in the

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. As is Peacocke's own view that 'Scientists still believe that they are exploring a reality other than themselves; that even after the demise of positivism, their researches aim to enable them to depict reality, namely, the entities, structures and processes of the natural world; that they do so fallibly, making use of metaphors and models that are revisable' (See A. Peacocke, 2001, 22). The reader might like to note that within the science and religion field from which the present research emanates, physicist Alistair McGrath in his recent trilogy *A Scientific Theology* similarly adopts a qualified realist view of existence arguing that 'reality awaits'; 'at least some degree of epistemic access to a reality which exists 'objectively'' is possible; and an approximate semantic representation of the truth is also possible (See A. E. McGrath, 2002, 75-76).

<sup>49</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix: Science and Faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Oxford: Lion, 2001), 243.

<sup>50</sup> R. Audi, *Epistemology: A contemporary introduction to the theory of knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 246.

<sup>51</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 242.

<sup>52</sup> M. Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), x.

<sup>53</sup> S. Clark, 'Nothing without Mind,' in J. H. Fetzer, ed., *Consciousness Evolving*, Advances in Consciousness Research Vol.34, (John Benjamins: Amsterdam, 2002), 139-60.

moonlight, and I say, 'Nice moon tonight,' and you agree. Are we creating the moon?"  
"Yes," he said.<sup>54</sup>

But the moon, or anything else, cannot have been 'created' by human theorising. The explanatory and predictive success of science<sup>55</sup> is methodologically dependent on there being a reliable, somewhat conceivable and comprehensible reality, which at the same time is covalent with the capacity to think and conceive: there is, in other words, a somewhat reliable correspondence between the knower and the known, there is a way things 'are'. That these *a posteriori* accounts of the externally real are possible is a central working assumption<sup>56</sup> of realism and the natural sciences. Hence the reality-referring capacity of cognitive operations achieving expression in the epistemic notion of what has been termed strong objectivity<sup>57</sup> is not unwarranted,<sup>58</sup> given the apparent success of science at describing the world, its matter and its processes. It is an observation grounded on the achievements of the experimental method and as Hilary Putnam argued in line with the view of Alexander (fn 51), some such realism is the only approach that does not 'make the success of science a miracle'.<sup>59</sup> In which case the reality of 'things' that can be known can be given poetic expression. There are:

the stars themselves  
gyring down to a point  
in the mind; the mind also  
from that same point spiralling

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<sup>54</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 18. The reader might find it useful to note the other positions Searle is arguing against. They include the French-Algerian philosopher J. Derrida, whose writing helped establish the school of 'deconstruction'. Central to Derrida is his argument that texts referring to something in particular do not have an unchanging meaning, leading to Searle's rejection of Derrida's view that "There exists nothing outside texts". Nevertheless this is arguably a misunderstanding of Derrida, who would perhaps be better understood as arguing that all knowledge is relational and perspectival, rather than failing outright to refer to anything objective. Or classically, again, in the contemporary work of the American philosopher R. Rorty, who critiqued the idea that the mind can adequately emulate or map external reality, leading him to say: "I think the very idea of a 'fact of the matter' is one we would be better off without" (p. 19).

<sup>55</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 72.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>57</sup> R. Trigg, *Reality at Risk: A Defence of Realism in Philosophy and the Sciences*, (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), 27.

<sup>58</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God: The End of All our Exploring*, (Oxford: One World, 2001), 26.

<sup>59</sup> H. Putnam, cited in A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 124.

outward to take in space.<sup>60</sup>

What is there? If the foregoing argument is basically correct and the “real”, ‘natively’ present world<sup>61</sup> is a genuine background in and against which the play of cognitive faculties occur, and the necessary foil of human agency, it is peculiar that such a view is, as Searle objected, an article of rhetoric and scorn.<sup>62</sup> There appear sound and positive motives and reasons susceptible to considerably more evaluation than available in the terms of the present study, to argue that there is a world to be known. As Nicholas Lash commented in his perceptive observations on the various relationships holding between science and religion, there is no perspective-less point a ‘god-like nowhere’ from which to engage reality. But it does not therefore follow that there is no world to be known. What is there? From the human perspective an answer is only possible amid some kind of worldview, some kind of ontology, some kind of metaphysic, some story of the world and of its possible nature.<sup>63</sup>

Of critical importance, implicit to the dynamic question ‘what is there’, are two recurrent epistemological tendencies of central interest to the thesis polemic. Both are needed to clarify the inherent intellectual danger of what is being termed in the present thesis the ‘Enlightenment vision’. The first is that as a consequence of the success of the scientific method all knowledge, implicitly or explicitly, is tied to the ideals of *impartiality* and

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<sup>60</sup> R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems, 1945-1990*, (London: Phoenix, 1993), 478. Fragment from ‘Cones’.

<sup>61</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 61.

<sup>62</sup> As Searle comments: ‘I regard the basic claim of external realism – that there exists a real world that is totally and absolutely independent of all of our representations, all of our thoughts, feelings, opinions, language, discourse, texts, and so on – as so obvious, and indeed as such an essential condition of rationality, and even intelligibility, that I am somewhat embarrassed to have to raise the question and to discuss the various challenges to this view. Why would anyone in his right mind wish to attack external realism?’ (See J. Searle, 2000, 14). Searle has invariably been critical of post-modern and often deconstructive approach to existence and knowledge (See K. Mulligan, ‘Searle, Derrida, and the Ends of Phenomenology’, in B. Smith ed., 2003, 261f). Further to the earlier comments advocating Searle’s philosophy is the additional recognition of the ‘scientific’ nature of his thought in producing a definite body of knowledge in concert with the empirical sciences, and which is therefore descriptive, i.e. the reader might find it helpful to note the commitment of realism to *description*, or as Mulligan observes, ‘Real realists have descriptive leanings’ (p. 280).

<sup>63</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of ‘Religion’*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 96.

objectivity.<sup>64</sup> In the second, related to the first, it follows that claims to truth and genuine experience of the world admit validation from a *universal viewpoint* that is demonstrably independent of the knower and so widely, even universally, accepted.<sup>65</sup> Such a claim is arguably a version of realism inspired by the desire to defend it from the most dominant form of antirealism, the standpoint of *perspectivism*. Although it occurs in varied forms the connecting thread is that statements about the foregoing sense of objective reality, i.e. Jaspers' notion of the 'object', can be watered down and their epistemological claims decisively weakened because such views are just too reliant on an inevitably perspectival stance manifesting highly specific subjective distortions. There is, in other words, only ever a highly mediated and conditioned view of reality. In the logic of the argument nothing is really and finally and satisfyingly independent of the question 'what is there?'

Hence Searle notes that according to perspectivism, it is impossible to view reality directly and so a given person has to approach reality through their own assumptions and preconceptions. In which case whatever is said about the world is rooted not in existence but in the perspective of the knower.<sup>66</sup> A position, which as Searle counters is really the same as saying something can only be true if it can be known from no point of view at all! This is not only an unjustified assumption, it is also impossible!<sup>67</sup> As Thomas Nagel has commented, wanting to arrive at an absolute conception of reality untouched by particular perspectives is really to try and achieve a description of existence as it would be without human life. It would require a departure from the specifically human, sentient *viewpoint* in space and time.<sup>68</sup> The view of molecular immunologist Dennis Alexander, already cited above, is also of note in this regard. In view of the social location and unique interests of the practicing scientist it is arguably impossible to be totally objective

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<sup>64</sup> F. Kerr, 'The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology', in R. J. Russell *et al.*, eds., *Neurosciences and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications & Berkeley: Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2002), 37.

<sup>65</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 19. The impact of what Peacocke terms the 'challenge of scientific culture to religion today' will be examined in Chapter Three. Suffice to note, in advance, that his hopes for strict reasonableness and cogency in relation to Transcendence are perhaps fatally compromised theoretically, as Jaspers will make clear.

<sup>66</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21. More specifically Searle diagnoses the argument as a 'use-mention' fallacy. Namely a fallacy that supposes that the conceptual and linguistic necessity of grasping something means that the 'fact' identified is itself linguistic (22).

<sup>68</sup> T. Nagel, cited in F. Kerr, 'The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology', 38.



in science, or in any discipline.<sup>69</sup> Or as Freeman Dyson comments critically, the best way to understand science is to understand the individuals who practice it.<sup>70</sup> Hence the idea of an entirely impartial objectivity accessible from a universal view point, thus communicated with ample clarity to a disinterested observer who can subsequently also confer the status of 'real knowledge' on this particular aspect of existence, is an impossibility. But as with J. W. van Huyssteen's comment above (fn 38) relating to an objective environment is not simply a linguistic matter 'all the way down', and just because words are invented to describe things, objects and facts in the world it does not follow that the things, objects and facts have just been invented!<sup>71</sup>

As the common-sense view of ordinary people,<sup>72</sup> and an inalienable assumption of natural science,<sup>73</sup> the working basis, until serious contradictory evidence suggests otherwise (which seems impossible or unthinkable), is that there exists a physical world open to enquiry. Suffice to say, it is curious that people are uncertain of evidently objective facts of the world. 'Has not something gone seriously wrong', writes the philosopher Mary Midgley, 'with the current notion of *existence* or *reality* when it is

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<sup>69</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 256. As Kerr comments, the search for 'primitive sense-data in order to find a level of experience that would supposedly be free of all interpretation, subjective distortion, etc., is fundamentalism transposed into an adjacent discourse' (See F. Kerr, 'The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology', 38).

<sup>70</sup> F. Dyson, 'The Scientist as Rebel', in J. Cornwell, ed., *Nature's Imagination: The Frontiers of Scientific Vision*, (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 11.

<sup>71</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 22. Rahner, it can be noted in these introductory and foregrounding comments, was also convinced by a form of realism, in his terms Thomistic realism, after the thinking of Italian philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), with its commitment that the mind can know reality (See M. J. Scanlon, 'Christian Anthropology and Ethics', in J. A. Dwyer, ed., 1999, 41). So too with Lonergan, for whom *realism* expresses the philosophical position that the outgrowth of human cognitive activity 'corresponds to reality...[and has] an immediacy that is prior to any cognitive mediation by which we know something to be real' (See Entry for 'Realism': Glossary Project, Lonergan Web Site, [http://www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary\\_m-z.htm](http://www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary_m-z.htm) (09/07/07)). As H. Meynell comments 'according to Lonergan, who in this matter follows Aristotle, Aquinas and (I would have thought) the common sense of mankind, both the phenomena which we experience and the intelligible pattern within which they are found to cohere are aspects of the real objective world which confronts the human inquirer, and which would exist even if there were no intelligent beings to inquire into it' (See H. A. Meynell, 1991, 2).

<sup>72</sup> G. Strawson, *Mental Reality*, (Massachusetts: MIT, 1994), 1. The reader might like to note the difficulty of using terms securely or at least generically in philosophy. Strawson and Meynell above both refer to the notion of 'common sense'. However, Searle comments that "'Common sense" is not a very clear notion, but as I understand it, common sense is largely a matter of widely held and usually unchallenged beliefs...This sort of common sense has no opinion about basic metaphysical questions such as the existence of the external world or the reality of causation' (See J. Searle, 2000, 11-12).

<sup>73</sup> W. B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 131.

possible for such doubts to arise?’<sup>74</sup> Even ‘babies’ possess an innate capacity to comprehend the concreteness of the world,<sup>75</sup> and adults would not have survived had not their activities gained at least an adequate grasp of reality.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore reasonable to presume that human extroversion is indeed set against<sup>77</sup> an externally real world and that this world is transfactually efficacious and independent of the knower, be they a scientist or philosopher.<sup>78</sup> There is no alternative to this truth, at whatever level it informs human practice, if that same practice is to be efficacious.<sup>79</sup> Any attacks on these default positions are taken, by Searle, to be mistaken and are rare.<sup>80</sup> These brief arguments for external realism account for its prima-facie plausibility,<sup>81</sup> some form of which is widely accepted.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, very few people, as Willem Drees also noted above, apparently deny the reality of a world absolutely existent, independent, and objective.<sup>83</sup> Hence:

In our effort to give an account of our situation, here is how far we have come: there is a reality that exists totally independent of us, an observer-independent way that things are, and our statements about that reality are true or false depending on whether they accurately represent how things are.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>74</sup> M. Midgley, *Science and Poetry*, 137.

<sup>75</sup> A. Newberg & E. D’Aquili, *Why God Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 51. Experiments have shown the newly born to possess an innate ability to distinguish solid material objects from non-physical aspects of existence.

<sup>76</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 25.

<sup>77</sup> T. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan*, 107.

<sup>78</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>80</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 11, 15.

<sup>81</sup> M. C. Banner, *The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>82</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 22.

<sup>83</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 15.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 134. Indeed, anti-realism of any kind raises profound questions both about the true nature of reality and the ability and willingness of humans to conceive and represent it. The ‘deeper reason’ behind all forms of anti-realism, according to Searle, is that it satisfies a basic ‘will to power’, the ‘desire for control’ and manifests a deeply abiding resentment. In fact, in Searle’s analysis the driving psychological force behind antirealism is precisely this desire to undermine science and its supremely evident success in comprehending an objective world. If the humanities can level down the achievements of science both disciplines can be seen to deal with social constructs! Indeed, for some it seems just too disgusting that they should be at the mercy of a real world (See J. Searle, 2000, 17, 19-20, 33). The ‘realist’ philosopher W. P. Alston, has also commented that if ‘someone were to put a gun to my head and force me to formulate a single fundamental route of opposition to realism about truth, I suppose that I would say “intolerance of vulnerability”’ (See W. P. Alston, 1996, 264). Alston goes on to assert that subjection to a real world is, for some, ‘powerfully repugnant’, ‘even intolerable’. Jaspers saw and clearly felt, apparently quite correctly, that positivistic justification is, at the end of the day, about self-preservation (See K. Jaspers, 1969, 234).

The primary purpose of the description and analysis so presented, of reasonable grounds for adopting a positive relationship to an objective physical world, is to establish this preliminary 'ground' as the cogent basis from which a further question is asked. Will, a complete description of the physical (or non-physical) facts about the world, of its mind-independent and mind-dependent meanings answer the question 'what is there' in all its possible depth? And if, implied in simply posing the question at all, it might not, then *where*, reiterating the great question of humanity of any age, does a person obtain guidance?<sup>85</sup> What 'more' is there to be known in raising such a question, and how can it be known? For the human search for what is 'out there', for plausibility, for narrative and pattern and meaning is an inalienable reality in every culture and time.<sup>86</sup> And critically for Jaspers, it is not a question that can be limited to the deliberations and findings of science.

For Jaspers science is able to shun nonsense, yield reliable knowledge about the world, and even if strictly fallible its methodological commitments allows it to correct itself continually.<sup>87</sup> Even from the Greek philosophers preceding Socrates all science has had a compelling certainty and method aimed at realising knowledge that is universally valid.<sup>88</sup> Why, once again for the avoidance of doubt, is this defence, of a well rounded object-knowledge, formalised in often verified science, important to the thesis? It is important because the philosophical theory of Jaspers' takes flight, so to speak, at the point at which strictly cogent human thought about objects reaches its natural limit. It is critical to closely define this relationship to an objective world in order to invoke the deep shift in philosophical posture that Jaspers advises will then reveal a much more significant experience of the world. These experiences cannot be established without first gathering a good sense of objective reality.

It is evident from Jaspers' thought that the answers to questions posed by human rationality in a real world are simply not limited to the findings of science. Indeed, the

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<sup>85</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 66.

<sup>86</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, 191.

<sup>87</sup> C. F. Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers: An Introduction to his Philosophy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 39.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

depth and openness and possibility of the human person, prompting them to ask ‘what is there’ according to Jaspers, *cannot ever be answered by empirical studies or verifiable facts* which cannot contain or express the dimensions of existence apparently open to human life.<sup>89</sup> Arguably, Jaspers’ whole philosophy is a theory accounting for how an extra dimension to existence can be known to human consciousness. For Jaspers human existents really start ‘living’ authentically and richly, and even happily, in response to a non-objectifiable basis to all physical existence which he calls Transcendence.<sup>90</sup> There can be no charts ‘drawn up’ to describe the depths of human existence and possibility in view of the fact that the most significant experiences of human existence do not reside amid the cognition or verification of objects within the mundane world.

Transcendence was defined above as ‘an attribute of being above and independent of the universe’. That which is ‘transcendent’ was seen to have the additional meaning of referring to the ‘Deity: In His being, exalted above and distinct from the universe’. Further and specifically, for Jaspers, Transcendence refers to absolute being, being-as-such, God. Such definitions suggest that the notion of Transcendence is not something readily graspable or immediate in the same way human life has conceived knowledge of its physical environment, enhanced immeasurably through the practice of science. Perhaps then, the notion of Transcendence is outside what the average human person can know, or a pseudo-question, an ephemeral and finally meaningless construct, a kind of harmless by-product of an inevitably theorising mind? Jaspers immediate rejoinder would be that it is not. It was suggested above that a *second foundation* to a rounded object-knowledge was required. It is time to approach the existential depth of life now that a preliminary objective orientation has been established.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for ‘Jaspers, Karl’, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, 80.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>91</sup> The reader might like begin the next section by considering the fact that any world-view contains a somewhat transcendent element in view of the belief that the given description of reality is, after all, adequate given the likelihood of being underdetermined by the evidence. Indeed the adamant decision to exclude levels of existence, particularly holistic appearance, and thereby eschew metaphysics ‘is a metaphysical one’ (See R. Trigg, 1980, 59). As Jaspers noted, both philosophy and science are united in manifesting the truth of reality that lies *outside of* strictly practical interests (See K. Jaspers, 2003, 74).

## 2. WORLD ORIENTATION (ii): EXISTENTIAL DEPTH

Preliminary grounds have been presented for finding initial answers to the question ‘what is there’ amid an objective physical environment that is presupposed by common and technical sense as a default position. It is a claim to realism continually reinforced by the human experience of existence and that reaches its maximal epistemological clarity in scientific activity. But it has been conjectured above that relating to reality in these terms is insufficient and thus incomplete. Something *more* and beyond this level of acquaintance is sought. As Jaspers argues in summary of the foregoing discussion:

Even before we begin to philosophize, the *question of reality* seems to be *already answered* in every moment of our life. We deal with things, and obey the modes of reality as they have been handed down to us. There is this human existence, there are these demands and laws; human relations have an orderly arrangement and there are correct ways to govern them. Bodies exist; we find causal regularity in natural processes. Atoms exist, and energy. There are techniques for mastering nature; nature seems reliable, although the technical results of our knowledge often come about in ways scarcely different from those of primitive magic – with as little comprehension and just about as thoughtlessly. In this unquestioning attitude we achieve a seemingly adequate view of the presence of reality. The problem arises only as I become *conscious of a lack*: when I desire reality that I neither yet know nor myself am, when this reality cannot be deliberately attained by productive and venturesome action or planning in the world, only then do I begin to philosophize.<sup>92</sup>

It is these standards of essentially object-based knowledge that are suggested to not account for the full range of human experience and knowledge, as Jaspers again implies, they can apparently be transcended philosophically in some way. It is apparently possible to move beyond them to more significant depths. How can such a claim be justified? It is time to establish the second foundation referred to earlier (fn 13): that (ii) experience is a

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<sup>92</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 65-66. In other words, the ‘lack’ or deficiency stems from the sense of ‘Being’, of there being more to life than is met by simply intentional forms of consciousness that are correlated with an objective environment, as will shortly be discussed in Chapter One.

deep and fundamental source of information about the world that is often at odds with what can be stated objectively. Recall also, Jaspers commented above (fn 3) that: 'When I become aware of myself I see that I am in a world in which I take my bearings', and that he consistently admonishes his readers to note that the intentional fragmentation of existence into splits of subjects and objects must be also accompanied by a determination not to confuse *reality itself* with these fragments.<sup>93</sup> In this regard Lash's argument that experience unites the conceptual division of reality sundered into 'parts' by conscious intentionality is particularly useful.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps then experience *per se*, more broadly and intuitively considered, is much less specific and much more open ended than experience of particular things? This essential and existentialist dynamic is well expressed by Rowan Williams:

we might say that a concrete reality is a form taken by a universal process of reality or action or energy, a form stable enough to set up that resonance we call recognition and knowledge, a form whose specific character cannot, however, be reduced to a final and closed pattern that we might register and file away, since it is what it is *only* in virtue of the entire, still moving, and therefore unknowable, flow of universal interaction. We cannot plot all the relations in which it stands, and therefore, although we may respond to it accurately and truthfully, we may also be surprised by it and mistaken about it. Thought and thing are moments in one process, but there is a necessary tension between them if we really wish to be truthful; that is, to see each concrete moment embedded in a whole pattern which comes to *this* particular point of complexity *here*.<sup>95</sup>

To borrow a phrase from Geertz which is highly appropriate to Jaspers' existentialist philosophy, there is always in human experience a 'dense thicket of particularity'<sup>96</sup> at any given point of complexity that extends beyond steadily reliable knowledge of objects or simple evidence, like the fact that Greece is warmer than Scandinavia. The *actual experience* may be deeply existential and value laden. What exactly does this mean?

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 75. As Jaspers reinforces elsewhere, 'I do not have the ground of being in existence; nor in the varied definitions of some particular being as an object of knowledge and cognition' (K. Jaspers, 1971, 4).

<sup>94</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflection on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God*, (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 22.

<sup>95</sup> R. Williams, *On Christian Theology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 169.

<sup>96</sup> W. J. Brennenman Jr. *et al.*, *The Seeing Eye: Hermeneutical Phenomenology in the Study of Religion*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 48.

Lash, whose thinking, as suggested above, embodies sensitivity to the intricate nature of human understanding, describes the situation crisply. To appeal to a dense thicket of particularity is arguably to refer to the:

existential uniqueness of individual particulars which no science can directly apprehend. It may be possible to treat any event as an instance of the operation of certain “laws,” but no formulation in terms of recurrent regularities can even begin to indicate, let alone to *grasp*, what it is that makes *this* event or experience – this meeting, this pain, this relationship, this joy, this love, this betrayal – unrepeatably, incommunicably, uniquely *itself*.<sup>97</sup>

It means that the kind of dogmatic “spectatorial knowing”<sup>98</sup> that Jaspers continually berates in his philosophy simply cannot settle the question of ‘what is there’. There is always a unique possible depth and confrontation beyond the canons of parsimony fuelled by even the most critically adroit conception of ‘things’. There is often a depth to experience it is difficult to conceive. And therefore Lash goes on to argue it is ‘undoubtedly true that we often have great difficulty (and by no means only in matters of religion) in giving an adequate account of the events, relationships, and experiences that matter most to us’.<sup>99</sup> But what precisely is an ‘experience’? By definition experience means to ‘have experience of...to undergo’<sup>100</sup> a particular object, or complex of objects or state of affairs in the world in some specific location and time. *Any experience* implies being conscious of the world in ‘such and such a way’ that distinguishes it, for example, from a dreamless sleep.<sup>101</sup> So experience is always a conscious mental going-on of some sort,<sup>102</sup> and that yields information about external reality.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 29.

<sup>98</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics: An Interpretation of the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 153.

<sup>99</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 62.

<sup>100</sup> *SOED*, 705.

<sup>101</sup> M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1966), 13.

<sup>102</sup> R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 244.

<sup>103</sup> K. Ward, *The Case for Religion*, (Oxford: One World, 2004), 161.

The mere fact of being conscious is synonymous with developing an awareness of the world.<sup>104</sup> Hence G. Strawson takes it ‘that “stream of consciousness” could equally be called ‘the stream of experience’ and that the expression ‘conscious experience’ is, strictly speaking, *pleonastic*.<sup>105</sup> What does Strawson mean? A pleonasm is using ‘more words in a sentence than are necessary to express the meaning’,<sup>106</sup> so it means that the words ‘to be consciousness’ have the same meaning as to ‘be experiencing something’, in an obviously particular way. As a contemporary philosopher of consciousness has suggested, there is really nothing more obvious and natural than the simple presence of experience itself which one cannot apparently deny.<sup>107</sup> Reflection abstracts, generalises, codifies, but is inherently unable to adequately conceive the rich reality of the world as it is experienced.<sup>108</sup> And hence in Michael Oakeshott’s words:

‘Experience’ stands for the concrete whole which analysis divides into ‘experiencing’ and ‘what is experienced.’ Experiencing and what is experienced are, taken separately, meaningless abstractions; they cannot, in fact, be separated.<sup>109</sup>

‘Experience’ therefore means all those deeply synthetic and often momentary states of consciousness with which an individual thinker perceives not just objects, but the ‘surrounding’ circumstances and world which make them possible.<sup>110</sup> The immediacy and fluidity of the real world causes not just objective realities to be organised into facts, but a generic ubiquity of *experience*<sup>111</sup> that is equally inseparable from a true estimate of ‘what is there’.<sup>112</sup> Experience is thus as a deeply significant phenomenal composite encountering much more than can be stated impartially.<sup>113</sup> And importantly, its significance resides not as an abstracted theory to which general agreement can freely be

<sup>104</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds and The Laws of Physics*, (Vintage: London, 1990), 525.

<sup>105</sup> G. Strawson, *Mental Reality*, 3.

<sup>106</sup> *SOED*, 1607.

<sup>107</sup> T. Metzinger, ‘The Problem of Consciousness’, in T. Metzinger, ed., *Conscious Experience*, (Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 1995), 8.

<sup>108</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, 153.

<sup>109</sup> M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, 9.

<sup>110</sup> L. Stevenson, *The Metaphysics of Experience*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>111</sup> I. Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature and God*, (London: SPCK, 2002), 98-100.

<sup>112</sup> B. Dainton, *Stream of Consciousness: Unity and Continuity in Conscious Experience*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 22.

<sup>113</sup> M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, 14.



given in a scientific and objective sense, but “*in and as it is*” irrespective of the ability of science to conceive adequate theories about it. It means that no such separation is possible between reality and experience because reality, in these terms, ‘just is’ the human experience of it.<sup>114</sup> As Oakeshott argues:

The view I wish to present is, then, that the real world is the world of experience, and it is real because and in so far as it is satisfactory in experience. Everything is real so long as we do not take it for something other than it is. Every judgement we make asserts this or that to be a characteristic of reality. But reality itself belongs only to the whole; no item of experience is real in isolation. And this implies, among much else, the rejection of all views which tolerate a divorce, either at the beginning or at the end, between experience and reality.<sup>115</sup>

On the basis of the present analysis it is clear why the externally real environment was argued above to have an active role in determining cognitive processes,<sup>116</sup> and that sound thinking ought, in principle, to mirror states of affairs in the world. Indeed David Chalmers talks of usurping the ‘hegemony of the skin and skull’ necessary to seeing ‘ourselves more truly as creatures of the world’, as agents ‘spread into the world’.<sup>117</sup> Therefore what makes conscious beliefs and experiences ‘conscious’, is the way they make the person aware of the world they live in.<sup>118</sup> But the seminal function of the conscious mind is not just about conceiving objects, but of being grasped by experiences, perhaps of this same reality, but in its phenomenal depths.<sup>119</sup> Consciousness therefore by its nature opens up areas of existence outside the grasp of an ostensibly object-based science.<sup>120</sup> Experience takes the mind outside of itself into a relation with the world that is somehow more than the world that is known dispassionately.<sup>121</sup> As Strawson points out:

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>116</sup> A. Clark & D. Chalmers, ‘The Extended Mind’, <http://consc.net/chalmers/> (23/05/04).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> F. Dretske, ‘Conscious Experience’, in F. Jackson, ed., *Consciousness*, The International Research Library of Philosophy 20, (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 1998), 279.

<sup>119</sup> B. O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 688.

<sup>120</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 213.

<sup>121</sup> B. O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 694.

Experience is necessarily contentful, e.g., sensorily or conceptually contentful. Like many familiar things, it appears extraordinary on reflection, and is very hard to describe in detail. It outruns language in many ways...It is part of reality. It is as real as a rock. The experience of an experiencing being is everything about what it is like to be that being, experientially speaking, from moment to moment as it lives its life. There is an enormous quantity of experience.<sup>122</sup>

Hence the actuality of human existence and experience is nothing less than the dynamical quality of complex unrepeatable and often spontaneous conscious experience-states.<sup>123</sup> It is therefore possible to argue that amid this phenomenal complexity the experiencing subjects has a special 'existential' knowledge of any particular time and location and amalgam of factors constituting a given perspective.<sup>124</sup> Hence the admonition to pay unique attention not just to scientific knowledge but also to all those special correlations and meanings that actually drive personal growth, experience and culture.<sup>125</sup> It is critical to bear in mind that this knowledge is not limited to abstract and reliable findings but rests on inestimably complex patterns of encounter in a phenomenal world. O'Shaughnessy puts this particularly well:

Now the most fundamental characteristic of consciousness is the closeness of its links with the World. Indeed, since representation is essential to consciousness, consciousness could be said to be born of the World or Reality, and even in its image. Moreover, the conscious uniquely are 'in touch' with the World. Consciousness might be compared to a window, through which for the one and only time we actually catch sight of Reality.<sup>126</sup>

'What is there?' The subjective movement toward intelligibility clearly strives beyond object-knowledge to a rich phenomenal experience of the world. In Jaspers' terminology:

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<sup>122</sup> G. Strawson, *Mental Reality*, 3.

<sup>123</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for 'Existence', *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 2, (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 297.

<sup>124</sup> B. O'Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 65.

<sup>125</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 129.

<sup>126</sup> B. O'Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 681.

Since existence is consciousness and I exist as consciousness, things are for me only as objects of consciousness. For me, nothing can be without entering into my consciousness. Consciousness as existence is the medium of all things – although we shall see that it is the mere fluid of being.<sup>127</sup>

Defining consciousness not just in its intentional stance, but as the ‘fluid of being’, intends to clarify the sense in which experience is looser and more diffuse, deeper and more significant than simply intentional splits between subjects and well known objects. Conscious experience-states function as a kind of informant,<sup>128</sup> bringing in the outside world and presenting manifold and various contents. A useful and descriptive analogy to Jaspers’ notion of the fluidity of experience can be found in the dynamical systems theory expounded by Alicia Juarrero. It is clear from her analysis that that the world has an astronomical dimensionality and astounding variation within it,<sup>129</sup> some of which is grasped by science, but much of which is left unsaid. What this means is that the sheer freight<sup>130</sup> of intentionality in its myriad forms is extremely difficult, arguably impossible, to quantify let alone qualify, which makes *experience* somewhat *sui generis*, or ‘in a league of its own’.

As Samay points out, ‘from the very first moment of explicit consciousness we can only intend this or that particular being, which becomes an object *for us* by the very fact that we intend it’.<sup>131</sup> But as has been suggested, there are many experiences that are not strictly factual and which do not depend on the knowledge of objects. Daniel Dennett has commented that ‘in crashing obviousness lies objectivity’<sup>132</sup> but what of those experiences which are not objective, what of the sheer openness of consciousness that apparently gives the person a flexibility and distance from straight forward factual existence.<sup>133</sup> Indeed:

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<sup>127</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 49.

<sup>128</sup> B. O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 688.

<sup>129</sup> A. Juarrero, *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behaviour as a Complex System*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 259.

<sup>130</sup> G. M. Edelman, *Wider than the Sky: The Phenomenal Gift of Consciousness*, (London: Penguin, 2004), 104.

<sup>131</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 14.

<sup>132</sup> D. C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 80.

<sup>133</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 11.

There are feelings, thoughts, evaluations and whole bodies of theory and understanding of other people, the arts and human existence. There are all the things the humanities deal with – literary and art and music criticism, history, economics, sociology and the more interesting parts of human psychology, philosophy and theology – all these studies are not exact and quantitative. But they enlarge human understanding and knowledge.<sup>134</sup>

In rendering to human life the many signals of the outside world conscious experience is terrifically difficult to conceive scientifically, and therefore it is difficult to systematically exclude the basic claim of any given person to have experienced ‘such and such’ to be the case.<sup>135</sup> As Gerald Edelman concedes, the range of conscious experiences that are possible are so wide and significant that there is no chance that experience will ever be exhausted.<sup>136</sup> And hence this notion of an ‘inconceivable depth’ to purely existential human living points towards a distinction between the categories of *evidence* (linked above to the epistemic standards of impartial objectivity), and *experience*, which is conjectured here to outstrip these codified foundations. Indeed allying experience exclusively to ‘evidence’ destroys many of the questions posed by Jaspers.<sup>137</sup>

In this matter Keith Ward supports the distinction between ‘experience’ and ‘evidence’ in ten separate and interrelated ways:<sup>138</sup> each is nakedly operative in constituting the actuality of any given instance. In an elaborated summation: evidence refers to items in *public record* and experience obviously does not. Science based formulations about Being are *repeatable*, personal experience is unique. Empirical procedures enumerate *general laws*, while the evaluative connotations of experience confer *significance*. Dispassionate objectivity is not *responsive relationality*. Where science proceeds via measurement, experience is often *immeasurable*. Objectivity and codification demand control which experience *habitually negates*. Natural science is often predictive but humans are *unpredictable*. Evidence must be uniformly convincing while experience is *uniquely descriptive*. In short, science ‘errs’ if it believes its theorising competency

<sup>134</sup> K. Ward, *In Defence of the Soul*, 52.

<sup>135</sup> G. Edelman, *Wider than the Sky*, xiii.

<sup>136</sup> G. Edelman & G. Tononi, *Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination*, (London: Penguin, 2001), 29.

<sup>137</sup> K. Ward, *The Case for Religion*, 158.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 158f.

blankets a complete description over agent-experience because its apparatus leaves undisclosed some of the most significant depths and facets of human living.<sup>139</sup>

It follows from this estimate of experience as a *sui generis* category in its own right that human language must be objective in order to adequately grasp existence, but it must elude the demise in which language becomes so objective that it excludes existentiality.<sup>140</sup> It is therefore regrettable that the necessary commitment to objectively conceiving and relating to a physical environment in empirical research has, in Anglo-American usage at least, always veered towards empirical objectivity as facticity, implicitly subordinating the role of the experiencing subject as a somewhat deficient viewpoint.<sup>141</sup> It is deficient in the sense of showing a preoccupation with external validation. But as has been suggested, human questioning is not only not constricted to objective knowledge, it is also *naturally* kinetic and as well as conceiving objects of knowledge ‘out there’, also works to interpret intuitions, attitudes and feeling, to name a few often non-objective experiences.

The kind of knowing which this *phenomenology* yields is, by definition, fundamentally participative.<sup>142</sup> Phenomenology as a discipline seeks to ‘just’ describe experience as it occurs within consciousness without continuously qualifying it with the findings of other disciplines, like the natural sciences. In other words, heterogeneous sets of observations informed by personal relationships, politics, aesthetics, history, obligations and morals and so on are serious aspects of the real world and have special things to say about existence.<sup>143</sup> These *information states* are generated ‘in encounter with’ the real world and are fundamental constituents of existence<sup>144</sup> that deserve attention along side more pristinely cogent disciplines, say like physics or mathematics. This kind of phenomenal encounter was used by Jaspers as a descriptive tool with which to speak of these often

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>140</sup> E. B. Ashton’s Translators Notes, K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, xv.

<sup>141</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 36.

<sup>142</sup> G. Morley, *John Macquarrie’s Natural Theology: The Grace of Being*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 26.

<sup>143</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 244.

<sup>144</sup> I. Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature and God*, 93.

obscured and somewhat 'unknowable' but nevertheless realisable depths.<sup>145</sup> It means to say that if there is a transcendent basis to existence, that it is likely to be experienced in 'one-offs' and that these unrepeatable events will fail the criteria of external validation. It means that Jaspers' hermeneutics, or the theory and practice of interpretation, must be *participatory* before 'clinical', and that dimensions of living may well be disclosed to one participant that are necessarily obscure for another, particularly if that other demands objective proof of a particular experience.

To repeat the earlier question again, what evidence is there for such a claim, that experience outstrips the capacity to account for it along strictly cogent and 'inspected' and well justified lines? Well, almost any stated desire to experience something 'simply for the sake of it', and to repeat such an experience as often as possible, speaks of the depths of living to be enjoyed by human life. As the Austrian-born British philosopher of science Sir Karl Popper observed in his excellent discussion of selfhood:

Climbing high mountains, climbing Everest for example, always seemed to me a striking refutation of the physicalist view of man...Whatever the explanation...the explanation cannot be physical; or so it seems to me. Somehow the mind, the conscious self, has taken over.<sup>146</sup>

Here is the sheer actuality of human experience pursued as an 'end in itself', requiring no more justification than that. It also appears that words are often unavailable or inadequate or an insufficient description of these realities.<sup>147</sup> Whilst science has been rightly and accordingly defended as 'the clearest expression and the highest achievement of general consciousness',<sup>148</sup> the unmistakable multiplicity and variety<sup>149</sup> of life stands as a potentially permanent and vexing tension to the natural sciences which function only in abstraction from the functioning whole of the world.<sup>150</sup> As Arthur Schopenhauer said,

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<sup>145</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 125-126.

<sup>146</sup> K. Popper and J. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, 146.

<sup>147</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind*, 549.

<sup>148</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 89.

<sup>149</sup> Entry for 'Monism', K. Rahner *et al.*, *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 4, (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 104.

<sup>150</sup> K. Ward, *In Defence of the Soul*, 53.

‘thoughts die the moment they are embodied by words’.<sup>151</sup> Or as Francis Galton put it, referring to hard won and clear discoveries in his work: ‘when I try to express them in language I feel that I must begin by putting myself upon quite another intellectual plane’.<sup>152</sup> Even Albert Einstein spoke of the laborious search for words and signs as a secondary abstraction.<sup>153</sup> But irrespective of the failure of language *the very search for* appropriate language suggests the primary nature of experience.<sup>154</sup> In these examples there is a certain wordless element of experience, to which linguistic expression is brought to bear in an attempted explication of its raw phenomenality.

The argument is therefore that at the present state of explanation the language of objectivity *inadequately renders phenomenal experience in all its depth*.<sup>155</sup> Or, in Olson’s elegant summary, ‘discourse *about...* sacrifices the overplus of meaning intrinsic to experience of...’.<sup>156</sup> Reading a book about an ascent of Everest will never equate to the experience of climbing the mountain! And it would therefore appear that Jaspers’ approach to the question of science is well justified by the exposition of experience that has been given. It may well be that there is significantly more to be experienced than scientific analysis is able to present. And there appear to be good preliminary grounds for suggesting that ‘experiencing subjects know of each instant that it is the instant it is, at the very least in the indexical form of ‘now’, and that such knowledge is unavailable to non-experiencing beings’.<sup>157</sup> That much must be true.

There is, in other words, no ‘proof’ for such an experience that stands outside active participation. Any such proof employs precisely those categories regarded as

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<sup>151</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, 548.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>154</sup> From E. B. Ashton’s *Translators Notes*, in K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, xiv.

<sup>155</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 14.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, x. Olson is referring directly to an experience of Transcendence, but it is arguably applicable to all depth phenomenon, i.e., love, death, joy, fear. More will be said about the experience of *love* as an experience *par excellence* in Chapter One.

<sup>157</sup> B. O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 65.

inappropriate to the depth phenomena of existence.<sup>158</sup> At the risk of labouring the argument, personal knowledge ‘can only be communicated by description to a very inadequate extent, since the communication, however effective and by whatever medium, is never equivalent to the experience itself’.<sup>159</sup> Plainly the capacity to identify instances of the property termed experience outstrips and is at odds with the capacity to produce a justifying rationale.<sup>160</sup> It is not that experience cannot be described retrospectively rather these depths of experience can never be adequately described in a *discursive* way. So it is clear that although:

modern empiricism subjects itself to a severe mental discipline, recognizing the limitations and the provisional nature of its science, striving for the openness, self-denial and realism of the inductive method, it should not be allowed to obscure the priority of the “world of life”, even in a necessarily scientific civilization.<sup>161</sup>

There can be little doubt about the complexity and variety and density of experience. Each and any experience should not be eliminated or transformed or endlessly qualified into something other than it at least initially appears to be by an overarching scientific epistemology (at least without utterly compelling reasons). It is an argument that represents a philosophical movement away from purely cogent, impartial and universal findings as to ‘what is there’, and towards an awareness of a deeper reality than science can express.<sup>162</sup>

### 3. CLARIFYING THE AIMS

Chapter One will convey the foundational insights that guide Jaspers’ philosophical thinking of special relevance to the present thesis. To begin with it will articulate the demarcation between science and the deeper question of Transcendence. It is Jaspers’

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<sup>158</sup> Correspondence about Jaspers with Dr D. Law, (23/08/2004). Law went on to also cite the Danish religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and the impossibility, for example, of having an objective relationship with one’s own death.

<sup>159</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 223.

<sup>160</sup> B. O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*, 64.

<sup>161</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for ‘Experience’, *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 2, 308.

<sup>162</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz: Five Lectures*, (London: Routledge, 1956), 55.



contention that science merely serves to provide a context which philosophy is able to transcend. Therefore, in line with the foregoing estimate of experience, Jaspers suggests that it is only the *existential self*, what he terms *Existenz* that is capable of such a transition. Both the limits implied in an objective comprehension of reality and the experiential depths that can surpass object-knowledge will then be considered as manifestations of the most enveloping form of reality, the very notion of Being or Transcendence itself which Jaspers termed the 'Encompassing'.

Chapter Two will provide a contrast to Jaspers' approach to Transcendence. As suggested above, the theorising of Rahner and Lonergan's 'epistemological approaches to transcendence' aptly contrasts what will be termed with Jaspers' own phenomenological-experiential model. These transcendental arguments will be summarily expounded in their core claims and evaluated in juxtaposition to Jaspers' thought. The insights gained from Rahner and Lonergan will neatly juxtapose and set up the relevance of Jaspers highly imaginative approach to the same problem.

Chapter Three, as a consequence, will extensively present the novelty of Jaspers' approach to Transcendence. Jaspers thinks through the question of possible Transcendence in terms of what he calls 'ciphers'. A cipher occurs during existential experience by taking the 'form' of the otherwise inexpressible Transcendence, often at the limits of science and in the depth phenomenon of human living. In his theory of ciphers resides an explication of his central argument that it remains the proper domain and task of philosophy to awaken the person to the surrounding depths of Transcendence.<sup>163</sup> For Jaspers, ciphers can provide a reliable knowledge of Transcendence, albeit with 'reliability' of considerably less certain epistemological foundations than many would accept critically. But as terms are clarified and the main steps argued for, the intention is to make clear why a cipher theory of Transcendence makes a valuable contribution to human understanding and experience, both scientific and philosophic.

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<sup>163</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion: The Perspective of Karl Jaspers*, (Lanham: University of America Press, 1988), 27.

Chapter Four will examine possible ciphers in scientific discourse and contrast a cipher philosophy with another competing epistemology, namely Peacocke's inference based explanation. Why is this important? It is important because certain philosophers have criticised Jaspers for remaining too abstract about Transcendence, and crucially, not providing examples of actual ciphers in practice. The notion of a cipher is potentially ambiguous without a practical expression, and one possible demonstration is to exhibit their relevance to the science and religion context. And as suggested above, a cipher theory of Transcendence is arguably an improvement upon the inference based approach to Transcendence, stemming from the same objective reality.

Before the analysis begins, one crucial dynamic remains to be disclosed. Jaspers argued that at the very moment 'of finding myself as existence in my world I have ceased to be *nothing but this existence*'.<sup>164</sup> The questions to be asked and answered by a thesis seeking to fathom the depths of the question 'what is there' are neither arbitrary nor of peripheral importance:

Everywhere in thought, so to speak, there is a place where something will be directly posited as absolute, because I cannot exist and think without the appearance of an absolute, whether in the involuntary absolutization of a particular or in the conscious unconditionality of my own free self-being. In the endless flux of things that are, I cannot escape from my pursuit of being, nor from seizing it either in true or in deceptive forms. I can, therefore, neither conceive this absolute being nor give up trying to conceive it.<sup>165</sup>

Finally, the following two citations can help crystallise for the reader what Jaspers means. The astrophysicist and contemporary author of popular-science John Gribbin recently wrote that:

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<sup>164</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 103.

<sup>165</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 34. In this regard see also (S. Samay, 1971, 182).

The fate of the specialist in any one area of science is to focus more and more narrowly on their special topic, learning more and more about less and less, until eventually they end up knowing everything about nothing.<sup>166</sup>

Jaspers' philosophy arguably stands at the polar extreme of Gribbin's conception of the scientific task. Science merely serves to indicate the point of departure for other forms of cerebration and discourse about existence, not as its sole interpreter and arbiter. It is a viewpoint further at odds with Jaspers' approach to philosophy as an experiential "love of wisdom" far beyond 'cogent' limits. As the interpreter of Jaspers C. F. Wallraff comments:

The teachers of philosophy seemed to him to be "personally pretentious and dogmatic," while their teaching struck him as "not really philosophy: for all its scientific pretensions it was always threshing out things not vital to the basic questions of our existence".<sup>167</sup>

For Jaspers, the significance of philosophy lies in its ability to communicate the Transcendence which resides in the incommunicable depths of the real world. It is an approach to reality that is uniquely illuminative for our time, one in which the very existence of the world is debated, its realities cut up and possessed and knowledge of life and existence endlessly qualified, arguably by the will to power, and the sham repetition of the needs for 'proof' of human experience. Of the equation of true claims to experience with cogency and demonstration, a defining of reality along lines that are countable and weighable,<sup>168</sup> and the articulation of a standard of knowledge that benchmarks disinterested facticity.<sup>169</sup> For Jaspers what authentically beckons human existence lies only at the boundary of such claims: 'Do not lose yourself in what is merely known! Do not let yourself become separated from Transcendence'.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> J. Gribbin, *Almost Everyone's Guide to Science*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), 1.

<sup>167</sup> C. F. Wallraff, *K. Jaspers*, 38. Williams Earle's introductory comments to Jaspers' *Reason and Existenz* lectures help compound the point: 'his philosophizing is designed to *reawaken* us to our own authentic human situation. And this situation, he is convinced, is of such a sort that any effort to freeze it conceptually or dogmatically, any attempt to schematize it exhaustively, or turn it into something known, must end both in a falsification of the situation itself and in a destruction of our own authentic possibilities' (See K. Jaspers, 1956, 9).

<sup>168</sup> K. Ward, *God: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (Oxford: One World, 2002), 2.

<sup>169</sup> H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*, (London: SCM Press, 1991), 415.

<sup>170</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 75.

## JASPERS' PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Perhaps the first thing a student of *Philosophy* will notice is its threefold structure. Book One deals with philosophical world orientation. Book Two presents Jaspers' existential view of the subject. Book Three outlines the metaphysic that compels the subject from the mundane world to a transcendent philosophic awareness. A central facet of *Book One* is the present concern. In the Introduction above, time was given to articulating a view of how the subject adequately relates to a real world through the medium of object-knowledge. For Jaspers the human experience of objectivity serves to mediate the reality of the world to human questioning.<sup>171</sup> It is an epistemological commitment apparently well founded given the explanatory and predictive success of science. In summary, it is clear that Jaspers' understanding of a real world as the backdrop of philosophy functions in a remarkably similar way to Searle's use of the notion of a 'background' to human attempts at description and theory. *Ontology* assumes this real background to existence in asking 'what is there' in this physical world, as opposed to what is merely thought to be there or hoped to be there, through a 'science and study of being'.<sup>172</sup> Indeed as an interpreter of Jaspers notes:

All genuine ontology asks: What is Being? It expects a straightforward answer in which an attempt is made to say what Being is in any given case. By asking "what," we ask for what can be said concerning certain things. The "what," asks for the concept of things. The presupposition of such asking is, however, - whether the questioner consciously realizes it or not -, the already definite pre-givenness of the things, of their being. To ask "what is this?," presupposes that it is already known *how* this is, what it is, in order to be able to be spoken of as such.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

<sup>172</sup> *SOED*, 149.

<sup>173</sup> G. Knauss, 'The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy', in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 167.

In the thought of Jaspers a committed realism thus forms the backbone of his approach. In Book One of *Philosophy* Jaspers takes time to establish the nature of this descriptive pursuit of cogent knowledge. The following citation is illustrative:

Science means the conquest of an existence *independent of the knowing subject*. It is motivated by the urge to know what applies always and everywhere, regardless of changes in time and in historic individuality – to know what will be valid even beyond man, for any possible rational being.<sup>174</sup>

But, typically, he does so *only* in order to quickly distance philosophy from the aims and aspirations of science. As intimated in the Introduction, scientific theories are not exhaustive descriptions of reality, and however accurate and formidable these representations are, as objectifying analyses, and available in what Jaspers termed ‘magnificent drafts’,<sup>175</sup> they can never be conclusive. Science, Jaspers continually insists, does not exhaust the description of existence, it only ‘stages’ a situation for it, for further and more philosophically cohesive explanations of reality.<sup>176</sup>

## 1. PHILOSOPHY AT THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

If ontology is the science and study of being, then what is ‘being?’ Being by definition is ‘existence, material or immaterial; life...in some relation of place of condition...substance, constitution, nature’.<sup>177</sup> The clues here are words like *existence*, *material* and *material* denoting a *particular location* within the wholeness of the world, and therefore not its totality or fullness or comprehensiveness per se. In other words, this ancient problem of exactly what ‘being’ is,<sup>178</sup> ‘what is there?’, is invariably answered in

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<sup>174</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 120.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>176</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 8. As Jaspers argues, ‘Without a scientific world orientation, metaphysics will be fantasizing’ (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 149).

<sup>177</sup> *SOED*, 177. The reader might recall that it was suggested earlier (fn 6) that ‘Being’ and ‘Transcendence’ are used somewhat interchangeably, and that the terms would be clarified in Chapter One, specifically in the third element below: ‘Being and Transcendence: the Encompassing’.

<sup>178</sup> G. McCulloch, *The Mind and Its World*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 141.

the terms of the Enlightenment project and modern scientific knowledge. But Jaspers takes up the implicit danger of equating ontology with what can be known in these terms:

Ontology purports to be a doctrine of being itself as such and as a whole. In practice, however, it inevitably becomes particular knowledge of something within being, not a knowledge of being itself....it leaves a margin of indeterminacy...Ontology...is ultimately a doctrine of immanence, of subsisting, not of Being...<sup>179</sup>

Human intentionality appears firmly set within a real tangible world of objective significance. But clearly for Jaspers the scientifically known is not and never can be the *whole* of all that can be known.<sup>180</sup> A further philosophical nuance will help clarify the distinction. Jaspers designates this basic level of human experience amid an empirically describable physical reality with the German term *Dasein*. *Dasein* refers to that 'factual mode of existence of something that is situated in space and time...the empirical domain of what is already given, already 'there', well-rounded and positive'.<sup>181</sup> The person described at the level of *Dasein* includes a certain number of tensions, the drives associated with being bodily and immediate refractory exchanges with an external world. It is akin to living in an 'organic torpor',<sup>182</sup> of just existing and enduring existence. Closely linked to *Dasein* is this general and universal sense of consciousness that develops science in answer to the question 'what is there' in an effort to build cogency. Jaspers therefore observes that:

We can see three kinds of cogency: the compelling thought of mathematics and formal logic, the compelling reality of objective experience in the natural and intellectual sciences, and the compelling visibility of categories, essences, and possibilities of objective being. In mathematics we have the evidence of logical insight and proof. In the empirical realm we demonstrate, we test experimentally and practically, and we predict – but so that the origin of our predictions will be reasoned rather than obscure, and that their foundations and empirical results will be jointly observable as correlative. In the

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<sup>179</sup> K. Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, 148-149.

<sup>180</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 10.

<sup>181</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 9. See also W. Earle's introductory comments, indicating the person is first and simply an empirical existent, in space and time, among other 'things' (See K. Jaspers, 1956, 10).

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

doctrine of categories, and in their phenomenology, there is the visual presence of objects that are possible if not real; what happens here is that identical, unmistakable, undefinable, but visualizable elements and structures of world orientation are circumscribed, explicated, and made conscious as the framework in which, for us, the objective world exists. The knowledge of mathematical and formal logic, empirical knowledge, and categorical knowledge differ in the sources of cogency and in the methods of establishing it; within each field there are subdivisions for new variants of cogency. But all three entwine in the “knowledge” of world orientation.<sup>183</sup>

And so on and so on, as world orientation is developed, steps from endlessness are gradually taken and the deposit of knowledge shaped into magnificent and compelling drafts that can often satisfy Peacocke’s insistence that valid knowledge is universal (fn 65). Here is the scientific worldview seeking to outline a description of existence in terms of objective and impartial knowledge that can be known from a collective viewpoint. So it is clear from Jaspers’ argument that ‘being there’ as Dasein, human intentionality invariably designates a particular experience of subjectivity in a duality with one or more objects.<sup>184</sup> Hence the implicit argument that the subject-object dichotomy is the prevailing and often the post profound ambit of human knowing, as it has characteristically been since the Enlightenment, the efficacy of which was briefly defended in a strong view of realism.<sup>185</sup>

Jaspers suggests that disciplines like mathematics, physics, and biology increase *categorical* knowledge about the world by adding to the tally of accurate knowledge as to ‘what is there’. Such knowledge can be readily, clearly and accurately communicated and so can satisfy the interest, discussed above, in objectively stated facts about the world. However, flowing from object-knowledge another question arises. Is whatever can be known about the world in the terms of the Enlightenment project, of modern science and its methodology, all that can be said about existence? Jaspers answers in the negative. In

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<sup>183</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 123.

<sup>184</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 12.

<sup>185</sup> In Jaspers’ terminology, reiteratively, it is ‘logically impossible to think of something alone without thinking of something else at the same time. Confrontation in dualities is the unavoidable essence of possible thought’ (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 41).

point of fact, the movement away from pure science to a pseudo-science which claims more than its expertise within the subject-object dichotomy allows, is for Jaspers an aberration which can 'ruin' the human awareness of Transcendence, or 'Being'.<sup>186</sup> So the real question is not whether there is a world to be known that was asked in the Introduction, but whether the perceivable objects *within* the world, manifesting themselves within the subject-object dichotomy, is all that can be said about the world, about its Being, its wholeness, a possible transcendent depth.<sup>187</sup> Jaspers invariably and quickly qualifies any statement about positive knowledge with the rejoinder that positivity has strict limits: 'Cogency does not apply to the whole of reality. The existence of cogency means to us the existence of the pure object, but this objective being is not the being of all things'.<sup>188</sup> It means that endlessness remains *necessarily unconquered*.<sup>189</sup>

World orientation is thus a *methodological* quest of endlessness which only serves to make it reappear in other forms, while our world is the real reduction of endlessness to finite forms, as existing infinity. The world is not an aggregate of finite things, nor is it endlessness; it is the process from the endless to the finite and back. Since endlessness delimits both orientation and the world, it is this limit – reappearing over and over again as the impenetrable in a being we can objectively feel only negatively, as a limit – which shows that *our being has another source*. For if we managed to see the world in the round and to see through it as a real closed system, it would be wholly and purely itself and sufficient unto itself. In no sense would it remain a phenomenon we might transcend; it would be being-in-itself and the cause of all things. This is a basic philosophical insight: *a closed reality of the world* – not indeterminately endless, not always based again on another mundane reality, but its own cause and origin – *would void transcendence*.<sup>190</sup>

What exactly does Jaspers mean by a 'closed reality of the world'? Bernard O'Conner observes the crucial insight in which Jaspers following his 'Kantian heritage...does not permit the World itself to become an object of consciousness...As such it constantly recedes before the advance of consciousness. The empirical object, which is an element

<sup>186</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 10.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>188</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 125.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.



of consciousness, mediates the presence of the reality of the World to the self...The empirical is encompassed by that dimension of consciousness which accompanies, transcends, and provides the proper context for it'.<sup>191</sup> Hence like Immanuel Kant, the highly influential German thinker of modern times, Jaspers believed the world to be beyond objective definition.<sup>192</sup> Science seeks a world unity but finds it unattainable.<sup>193</sup> Any unity is only ever a unity *within* the world, and not the unity of the world itself, which ever eludes the grasp of intentional consciousness splitting and sundering existence into 'bits and pieces' of attention.<sup>194</sup> As such the wholeness of existence is broken down and so no unity that is subsequently realised is ever the fundamental ground of existence:

The given world we see cannot be reduced to one principle. It extends in existence from the infinitely small to the infinitely large, both equally far removed from our field of vision. Our immediate sense perception penetrates neither the immeasurable world of the stars nor the processes inside the atom; all that we get from each are perceptible signals. And yet the underlying reality we seek in science can only be one. The sort of imagined models in which we attempt to visualize the fundament comes from the world of our senses but is aimed at something that encompasses this world and includes it only as a special case.<sup>195</sup>

But as O'Connor suggested and the present polemic is inching towards, the empirical is encompassed by a dimension which accompanies, transcends, and provides the proper context for the knowledge of particular things intentionally. In which case the empirical

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<sup>191</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

<sup>192</sup> As Jaspers argues in Volume 3 of *Philosophy*, the 'being I grasp is a definite being. When I ask what it rests upon I find another being. When I ask what it is, another being stands next to it, for comparison. It is always a being among other being in the world' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 37).

<sup>193</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 135.

<sup>194</sup> An *a posteriori* argument that gives significant valuation to phenomenal experience is arguably also compelling in the likely absence of any 'grand unified theory' from science such as will settle the question of existence in any conceivable scientific way (See S. Hawkins, 'The Impossible Puzzle', in *New Scientist*, 5 April, 2003). Or as Jaspers comments, for a 'scientist, world unity is a true guidepost, never a truly existing object' (See, K. Jaspers, 1969, 136). Indeed the world, *as* phenomenal, *cannot* be being-in-itself (See K. Jaspers, 1969, 173).

<sup>195</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 139. Alternatively, in Volume 3 of *Philosophy*, 'Philosophical world orientation has shown us that the world does not rest in itself. The world proved to be inconclusive; its cognition as a self-sustained, self-contained, self-sufficient whole became impossible' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 5).

‘tally’, so to speak, of objects *within* the world, is a very different question to the nature of that same world, ‘as such’, which cannot be approached objectively. It means to say, once again, that there are questions which cannot be answered by the close scientific scrutiny of existence. To pick up an echo of the previous discussion in scientific realism, the driving force of the Enlightenment project, flowing into modern science, has been to create an empirical invariance within the wholeness of the evident world<sup>196</sup> and *capture* a ‘snapshot’ of the various processes in motion<sup>197</sup> which ‘untouched’ form a complex multi-layered reality.<sup>198</sup> The reader might find that the critical realist and philosopher of science Roy Bhaskar makes this point distinctly, and clearly in support of Jaspers:

What the experimental scientist does in the laboratory is to artificially generate a closure of what is essentially an open system, in order to identify the working of a single generative mechanism or causal complex, a single process, or complex, totality or field, whatever the object of study, in isolation from the influence of other factors.<sup>199</sup>

Science in these terms cannot, in principle, ever solve the problem of whether there is some kind of synthetic unity to existence binding all the disparate appearances together, something that might genuinely be called Transcendence or Being. While science is aimed at the knowledge of objects, philosophy, for Jaspers, resides in an awareness of wholes, not bits and pieces and parts of the world.<sup>200</sup> It has in mind a different relation to the world than that described by even the most brilliant and accurate science. The essential difference being that since only the finite can be adequately expressed in objective statements the scope of science is radically open and incomplete.<sup>201</sup> It is therefore Jaspers’ contention that the:

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<sup>196</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 7.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>198</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, 157.

<sup>199</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 7.

<sup>200</sup> J. Collins, ‘Jaspers on Science and Philosophy’, 131.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

failure of the sciences to achieve a total system of the being of the world provides philosophy with a most significant clue, since it serves as a warning against any identification between object-being and Being as such.<sup>202</sup>

So whatever the precision and coverage of the scientific description of objects, there is a major difference between scientifically coming to know the real world of objective realities, and plumbing the depths that might also reside in the same world, perhaps within and somehow linking or residing within and beyond objects. These possible depths, the very 'world' itself, cannot become an object of the human mind and as such lies outside the domain of what is knowable by a scientific method. For Jaspers the philosophical approach to existence, albeit taking orientation within the world, is of a different order. As Wallraff proposes, the aim of philosophy is 'not to round out a self-sufficient and self-explanatory natural world, but to show in detail how the limits of scientific knowledge make such an intention forever untenable, and to point the way to a truth that does not depend on science'.<sup>203</sup>

In other words, the knowledge garnered by the theorising of intentional consciousness encountering the world can never fully answer the question 'what is there'. Science may rightly develop strong insights into the world but these are never absolute as they never disclose the unity of existence. Even in positivity, and the detailed empirical knowledge of natural realities, there remains this peculiar unanswered predicament and therefore turbulence and anxiety, and a besetting instability that somehow there is more to life than what can be termed its 'factual existence'. In actual fact, the unavoidable splitting of existence as intentional consciousness focuses on specific objects and questions yields a continually incomplete experience of living.

In further words of clarification, there are questions about life with which science cannot adequately deal. Science is different to philosophy because it ever intends something quite specific, and normally a methodologically conditioned aspect of the world that it is

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>203</sup> C. F. Wallraff, *K. Jaspers*, 46.

closely circumscribed.<sup>204</sup> Such scientific theorising can provide an agreed epistemic basis and stable description of the world on which to 'stand', a platform on which to adequately cognize the world and begin fathoming the openness of the questions of life it necessarily leaves unaddressed. Science establishes limits which humanity is able to look beyond. Indeed as Jaspers acknowledged, while there are practical activities wrapped up with the tangible conditions of life,<sup>205</sup> which it has been argued above more often than not express and manifest an enduring solidity, this is not all that can be said of existence and so Jaspers' question can now reasonably and explicitly be posed:

If by "world" I mean the sum of all that cognitive orientation can reveal to me as cogently knowable for everyone, the question arises whether the being of the world is all there is...*What is there, as against all mundane being?*<sup>206</sup>

What does 'mundane being' mean in this context? Mundane, by definition, is belonging to this world, worldly, earthly, and earthly as existing or living in or on the ground.<sup>207</sup> The reliance of human consciousness upon an objective physical environment has been expounded and briefly defended, and it has been proposed that science by its nature and scope and aims cannot answer all the questions posed by human life. As J. Collins suggests in presenting the implications of Jaspers' philosophy:

There is an essential incommensurability between the dynamism of the search for truth and the actual results obtainable through the scientific method. Science alone cannot quench the deep human thirst for metaphysical and absolute truth, which animates the scientific will to knowledge. Scientific method can yield an amount of certainty, within a limited sphere, but it can never bring to man an utterly personal security, such as will eliminate the risk of interpretation and decision. Even were the scientific description of the world a complete one, man would still be faced with the question of what attitude he is to take toward a world so described.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>205</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', 116.

<sup>206</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 3.

<sup>207</sup> *SOED*, 1372.

<sup>208</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', 123.

Objectivity is therefore only *one*, necessarily abstractive mode of being, meaning that scientific theorising and findings are never exhaustive of reality.<sup>209</sup> For science to hold absolute explanatory prowess, the significance of the world would have to be strictly concerned with material objectivities. Jaspers' argumentation is reflected in many aspects of the present debate between science and religion. Among the mainstream contributions is Ward's view that the scientific world view provides only a very partial and abstract vision of a world that *also* contains numerous other depths and phenomenal experiences.<sup>210</sup>

In summary, theorising human inquiry builds conceptions and descriptions in a real world.<sup>211</sup> The conscious states yielded through this process invariably present a split into a duality of both subject and object.<sup>212</sup> There is both a knower, and 'things' to be known. As Lonergan commented, undoubtedly the category of 'thing' (see fn 23) is useful to theories about existence, it 'satisfies the canon of parsimony. For it adds to data only what is grasped by intelligence and reasonably is affirmed',<sup>213</sup> it is central to scientific thought.<sup>214</sup> As objectivities in the world are illuminated, disclosed and verified, human life is able to 'win territory from endlessness'.<sup>215</sup> But conversely, what may be reasonably affirmed cannot be correlated with 'thinghood'. Even a perfect physical description of existence cannot answer the deep philosophical questions Jaspers intends to pose. To argue otherwise is to advance some form of materialism, whereby the physical facts about existence that compose objectivities are understood to exhaust *all* the facts in that

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 126. Alternatively, the 'model of complete physical predictability is, it must be stressed, an ideal, hypothetical abstraction from a complex dynamic, emergent reality' (See K. Ward, 1998, 139).

<sup>210</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, 157. Although as M. Midgley has noted, in her critique of science, the 'call to extend its methods into unsuitable territory does not come from science itself but from a peculiar vision of the world, a set of imaginative habits that have been associated with modern science since its dawn in the seventeenth century' (See M. Midgley, 2001, 1).

<sup>211</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 81.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>213</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 160.

<sup>214</sup> F. E. Crowe & R. M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 273. The reader might also find it helpful and illustrative to note that the physicist J. Polkinghorne has argued in science and religion dialogue that the world, in what he calls its 'it-story', is necessarily incomplete. There is more to life that can be prefixed with the designate 'it' (See J. Polkinghorne, 1986, 92). The example of the 'world' was the archetypal instance given above.

<sup>215</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 128.

anything positive that can be said about existence must entail something physical.<sup>216</sup> A response, which will be elaborated in an appeal to the sheer depth of human experience to follow, that can correctly be described as the triumph of theory over the palpable depths of reality confronting human life.<sup>217</sup>

There appear to be reasonable grounds for arguing that the physical and objectified presentations of space-time realities are a necessarily insufficient description of reality.<sup>218</sup> Science provides only an impetus in correctly recognising features of existence but it must not, either explicitly or implicitly, become absolutist in *elevating objectivity* as the *sole norm* for truth statements. So despite the undoubted achievements of a science constrained to sense data,<sup>219</sup> in view of the world engaged through science remaining incomplete, it invites other, philosophical, considerations.<sup>220</sup> Indeed, as Collins has argued in another form in the citation above, beyond object-cognition is ‘the desire to gain a fuller acquaintance with the world’s reality than the sciences can supply’.<sup>221</sup> Or in the words of Jaspers:

<sup>216</sup> D. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 124.

<sup>217</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, 155. A necessary codicil to the present polemic is required. This is not an anti-science stance. Jaspers was clearly critically aware of the relevance and significance of science (See S. Samay, 1971, 72). The philosopher M. Midgley provides apt comment: ‘What is called ‘anti-science’ feeling is not usually an objection to the actual discovery of facts about the world. (That would be very odd.) Instead, it is a protest against this imperialism – a revulsion against the way of thinking which deliberately extends the impersonal, reductive, atomistic methods that are appropriate to physical science into social and psychological enquiries where they work badly’ (See M. Midgley, 2001, 1). For Jaspers science does not so much work badly in relation to Transcendence, rather it is simply unable to deal with it experientially. To argue otherwise reflects a tendency ‘to accord exaggerated respect to the scope and power of natural science’ (See G. McCulloch, 1995, 220). If the logic of the argument in these terms was pushed to a conclusion it may be possible to see merit in texts like *Scientism: Science, Ethics and Religion*, and general critiques of epistemologies that chain the knowing process to a set of agreed and verifiable outcomes, against which dissenting views are marked as incoherent nonsense (See M. Stenmark, 2001). The notion of ‘scientism’ is clearly a precarious topic. However, it would be remiss not to note the innate tendency of *one* sphere of enquiry and dialogue to disregard in its entirety *another*. In this regard, among many possible illustrations, is Lash’s response to Rorty’s view that the West has been cleansed of theology: ‘One effect of this Olympian arrogance is to make all mention of God within its ambience *trivial*’, comments Lash (See N. Lash, 1996, 242). Science is thus essential to philosophy but is not its judge and jury, it ‘cuts a ridiculous figure’ if it tries to replicate its epistemological cogency (See R. F. Grabau, Preface to K. Jaspers, 1971, xiii).

<sup>218</sup> P. Clayton, ‘Theology and the Physical Sciences’, in D. F. Ford & R. Muers, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 350.

<sup>219</sup> T. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan*, 40.

<sup>220</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 245.

<sup>221</sup> J. Collins, ‘Jaspers on Science and Philosophy’, 129.

The philosophical attitude in world orientation, therefore, is to shun constructions of the world as absolute being, to refrain from generalizing particular conditions and perspectives, and to know that for us there is no “entirety at large.” We are no longer taken in by generalizations and absolutizations, by the frequent statements about the whole whose makers are not only saying more than they know but do not know the meaning of their statements.<sup>222</sup>

This is a citation that flags up the existentialist commitment to answering the deep questions of life, as to ‘what is there?’, ‘what does it all mean?’, ‘what is the nature of existence?’, only from the standpoint and drama of the knowing subject.

## 2. *EXISTENZ*: EXISTENTIAL DEPTH

Indeed it follows from Jaspers’ Kantian insistence that the world ‘itself’ cannot be known, that the world as One, as a limited whole, defies cognition,<sup>223</sup> and that science is intrinsically limited, that if the person tries to settle the account books of ‘what is there’ in these terms, then they are bound to produce an incomplete and ultimately unsatisfying answer:

As there is no knowledge for which the world is conclusive, no “right” order of existence that could possibly be definitive, and no absolute final goal that all might see as one, I cannot help getting more unsatisfied the clearer I am in my mind about what I know...<sup>224</sup>

So what then is this ‘fuller acquaintance’ that Jaspers has in mind, and that will apparently speak a different qualitative answer to the question of ‘what is there’ left unaddressed by science? In his 1931 Foreword to *Philosophy* Jaspers comments:

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<sup>222</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 145.

<sup>223</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 201.

<sup>224</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 7. Jaspers constantly tries to account for how experience, often at the edge of language, manifests a *continuation of knowing* even beyond these limits (See A. M. Olson, 1979, 78f). As Samay comments, somehow “‘I am’ *more than* ‘my character, my entrenched or nascent dispositions’ (See S. Samay, 1971, 146).

To comprehend what can be cogently known is vital to philosophy, but it will neither repeat what has become knowable in the sciences nor enter their field as a distinct subject claiming equal rights. In philosophizing I cannot look once again for the satisfaction I derive from knowing things in the world. What I seek in it and what it takes is more: it is *the thinking that transforms my consciousness of being* as it awakens me and brings me to myself in the original impulses whose pursuit in existence makes me what I am. No objective knowledge can do this.<sup>225</sup>

The first point implied in the innate dissatisfaction with the results of science is to argue that *existential consciousness* is different from the *intentional* consciousness, already intimated in the Introduction, and that it has a kind of rapturous dynamism with which abstractive scientific procedures cannot deal. Whilst experience remains the ‘font’ of empirical knowledge,<sup>226</sup> it was arguable above that experience outstrips what is strictly empirical, together with the human ability to adequately describe it. Rather, there is a form of listening and response that alone is clear in existential experience and that cannot be generalized.<sup>227</sup> How can such a claim be justified? This sense that the existential predicament of human subjectivity embraces something more than ‘things’ and their regularities means, for Jaspers, that the person is not just ‘there’ in the world as a somewhat rounded (Dasein) existence, amid a tightly meshed biodiversity and objective material environment:

As Dasein, man is ‘there’ as an unbroken part of the great ‘there is’. But the point is that this Dasein also conceals a privileged centre, a point of consciousness, in virtue of which man can become *aware of his being there*, and in fact of his *being there in time*. In other words, the moment of awakening from positivity brings for Dasein the awareness of its situatedness and transiency.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 1.

<sup>226</sup> B. F. O’Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

<sup>227</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 82.

<sup>228</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 10. Or, as Knauss describes Dasein: ‘Like everything living, we are bound to our corporeal existence by our vital functions. We live with our bodies in environment, into which we reach by means of tools, forms of social intercourse, language, and our total conduct, there objectifying ourselves’ (See G. Knauss, ‘The Concept of the ‘Encompassing’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 153).



The whole force of the previous section delimiting strictly cogent method and description is summed up by Jaspers thus:

Once the real, existing world has faded from our consciousness and has been replaced by merely particular objectivity and mere universal ideas, the result might be a crippling of scientific curiosity. Yet this will not happen to a science animated by the sense of a search for limits. If in this sense we want science to lay bare a part of being-in-itself, what comes to appear will indeed be grasped as an *independent existence*; but this existence from the outset is not more than a *possible cipher* of being, to be read by a metaphysically transcending Existenz.<sup>229</sup>

Jaspers called this privileged centre and thinking which transforms consciousness *Existenz*. What is 'Existenz'? The principal difference between Dasein and Existenz is that Dasein, or just 'mundane physical existence in objectivities' is 'satisfied', as it were, by the material obviousness of the world. Dasein is resolved to exist in a certain location responding to physicality and the material facts of living. It allows the person to wield the first person-pronoun, to participate in a world and articulate the words: "I am".<sup>230</sup> But as Jaspers also said, in no sense does such a statement invoke the depth phenomenon of possible existence referred to in the second foundation of the Introduction, namely the presentation of *existential depth*. Existenz is the name for this concentration and force of human living that leaps out of meagre immanence<sup>231</sup> because it cannot be sated by this 'merely empirical' level of psychosomatic existence. Indeed, there is a deeply held sense of dissatisfaction with this way of life:<sup>232</sup>

*Existenz* cannot be described even in a general way as the immanent modes can. Because it is a possibility in all men, it can only be pointed to or appealed to. But two features stand out. First, it is absolutely unique. It is each individual being as a particular, concrete historical being in so far as he is authentic. In this sense Jaspers uses *Existenz* to refer to

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<sup>229</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 171.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>231</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, 20.

<sup>232</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 60.

individual persons. He speaks of Existenz as doing or willing something. Secondly, Existenz is the ultimate source or ground of each individual self.<sup>233</sup>

Existenz, the inevitably subjective and qualitatively higher possibilities of living, seeks to engage the phenomenality of the world in all its bewildering variety and richness.<sup>234</sup> It is therefore a 'sign that points "beyond all objectiveness"'.<sup>235</sup> As Jaspers proposed, 'without Existenz everything seems empty, hollowed out, without ground, fake, because everything has turned into endless masks, mere possibilities, or mere empirical existence'.<sup>236</sup> These are significant claims that suggest a deficiency in the ability of generally scientific procedures and material 'facts about things' to adequately grasp fully human living:

The known *world* is the alien world. I am *detached* from it. What my intellect can know and what I can experience empirically repulses me as such, and I am irrelevant to it. Subject to overpowering causality in the realm of reality and to logical compulsion in the realm of validity, I am not sheltered in either. I hear no kindred language, and the more determined I am to comprehend the world, the more homeless will it make me feel; as the Other, as nothing but the world, it holds no comfort. Unfeeling, neither merciful nor unmerciful, subject to laws or floundering in coincidence, it is unaware of itself. I cannot grasp it, for it faces me impersonally, explicable in particulars but never intelligible as a whole. And yet *there is another way in which I know the world*. It is akin to me then; I am at home in it and even sheltered in it...This is no longer the world I know about in purely cognitive orientation...Mundane being, the being we know, is *general* because it is generally valid for everyone. It is the common property of all rational creatures who can agree on its being the same thing they mean. Its validity applies, in the endlessness of real things, to the definable particular. Existenz is *never general*, and thus not a case that might be subsumed under a universal.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> R. F. Grabau, Preface to K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, xix-xx.

<sup>234</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 4.

<sup>235</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 66.

<sup>236</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 63.

<sup>237</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 4-6.

Is there any evidence for such a claim that will lend the abstraction of theory concrete support? There is. It was argued in the Introduction that there is a mismatch between experience and its retrospective description. As Lash said there, it is ‘undoubtedly true that we often have great difficulty (and by no means only in matters of religion) in giving an adequate account of the events, relationships, and experiences that matter most to us’ (fn 99). And as was suggested in the citation from Strawson, experience is extraordinary, difficult to describe, outstrips language, and occurs in enormous quantities (fn 122). The likes of Schopenhauer, Galton and Einstein all seem to suggest a profundity. David Law’s recent elaboration of Jaspers appeals to the ‘unique particulars’ esteemed by the present thesis and which perhaps stretch toward this notion of *Existenz*:

It is precisely at the deepest levels of human being that the greatest mismatch occurs between what we wish to say and the materials we have for saying it. Human love is a good example. It is arguably impossible to provide objectively compelling reasons to persuade a sceptic that I love and am loved by another human being. I am able to point to certain phenomenon which I regard as indicative of the existence of a love relationship, such as duration, intimacy, a sense of security and so on, but a sceptic will always be able to provide plausible alternative explanations – biological, psychological, economic – for these phenomena. Such reductionist explanations of the love relationship will, however, fail to convince anyone who has experienced such a relationship.<sup>238</sup>

The alert reader might be sensitive to Jaspers’ belief as it unfurls in the cited literature that something ‘more’ is present to human life, irrespective of how difficult it may be to come to know.<sup>239</sup> The polemic is inching towards an unfathomable abyss.<sup>240</sup> *Existenz* is said to step out of the dissatisfaction that not all of Being is known in the assembly of

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<sup>238</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, (London: Continuum, 2001), 152n. In this regard the classic text of J. Soskice *Metaphor and Religious Language*, details the information ‘lost in translation’ during coarse descriptions of complex reality. Experience, in these terms, is just ‘too big’ to be appealed to retrospectively with any realistic descriptive force.

<sup>239</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 13. In this regard A. O’Hear’s comment about ‘object-knowing’ is of note: ‘Even though there can be no knock-down argument against the foundational nature of natural science, except an appeal to experience, we should not forget that in the end science itself comes to be treated as fact rather than fiction only because it is confirmed in experience’ (See A. O’Hear, 1997, 186-187).

<sup>240</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 303.

objectively verified facts and regularities about material existence. But this intimation of the *absolute*,<sup>241</sup> recalling Jaspers' comment in the Introduction (fn 165), actually only comes about because there is something more which Existenz is not, but towards which it strains. Actually, Existenz appears as 'being a self suspended between itself and Transcendence from which it derives its being and on which it is based...is what never becomes an object, the origin from which issues my thinking and acting'.<sup>242</sup> This is precisely what Jaspers terms the existential form of certitude in knowing something to be the case in some particular moment of the existence.<sup>243</sup> It means remaining open to the notion that what is not scientifically knowable is not necessarily declared non-existent!<sup>244</sup> In appealing to Existenz as an anthropological category breathing in the depths of human life Jaspers is trying to unite and repair what otherwise remains a 'torn state of Being for us'.<sup>245</sup> A state that owes its origin to the intentional character of consciousness ever intending some particular aspect of existence, but not its wholeness. This phenomenality of the world is as central to its existence as are the differentiated objects and scientific theories about them within it.<sup>246</sup> It seems, as perhaps is increasingly clear, to suggest a depth to experience at odds with the scientific method:

The breakthrough occurs at the *limits* of mundane existence. Philosophical thinking leads up to such limits and puts us in mind of the experiences they involve and of the appeal they issue. From the situations in the world, it leads to "boundary situations"; from empirical consciousness, to "absolute consciousness"; from actions qualified by their purposes, to "unconditional actions."<sup>247</sup>

Existenz speaks of nothing truly accessible or cognitive about world orientation.<sup>248</sup> Its very existence outstrips material facticity as it is rendered by the intentional activity of

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>242</sup> From the Glossary, in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), xix.

<sup>243</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 169.

<sup>244</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 10.

<sup>245</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 15.

<sup>246</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 79.

<sup>247</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 9.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

the theorising mind. It manifests the limits of cogency and eludes the grasp of knowledge within the confine of subjects relating to strict objects of sense. It does so because Existenz, the deep existential self, is *rooted in a far wider ambit*, and as such it is ever oriented toward this 'other' that the polemic thus far has been intimating.<sup>249</sup> Existenz outstrips the descriptive purchase of science and language because it is grounded in what has been briefly defined as Transcendence (fn 4, 5). As G. Knauss notes, 'just as it is true for objective relationships, that there is no subject without an object, it is equally true that there is no Existenz without Transcendence'.<sup>250</sup> It is time to address the promise made above (fn 6) that these terms 'Transcendence' and 'Being' would be clarified.

### 3. BEING AND TRANSCENDENCE: THE *ENCOMPASSING*

If the reader follows the thread through the preceding sections it is clear that the real world is knowable but limited, that science contains an implicit border and that experiential depth is held to perhaps go beyond the sense of linguistic purchase human life enjoys, even with an advanced grammar. Why is this? Essentially because as suggested, the world is fragmented by human inquiry, the human form of reference earlier called 'intentionality' which is almost invariably turned toward particulars,<sup>251</sup> necessarily conditioned by the subject-object dichotomy, and which do not answer any questions about the 'wholeness' of the world.<sup>252</sup> Perhaps these are good reasons why the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur commented in analysing Jaspers that the 'critique of knowledge at the very level of objectifying thought is magnetised by the question of Being'.<sup>253</sup> Jaspers sums up the point in arguing that:

Scientific *cognition of things* is not *cognition of being*. Scientific cognition is particular, concerned with determinate objects, not with being itself. The philosophical relevance of

<sup>249</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 67.

<sup>250</sup> G. Knauss, 'The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 160.

<sup>251</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 8.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Reiteratively, for Jaspers intentionality can never be correlated with Being (See S. Samay, 1971, 58).

<sup>253</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor, 1957), 629. As Jaspers argued, and perhaps the reader can see this remark as a species of the earlier notion of a 'background' informing human practice: 'I can seek only by anticipating what I am to find. Transcendence must be present where I seek it' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 4-5).

science, therefore, is that, precisely by means of knowledge, it produces the most decisive knowledge of our lack of knowledge, namely our lack of knowledge of what being itself is.<sup>254</sup>

What is this notion of 'Being' that is implicated in the desire to move beyond the limits of science and in the argument that the experience of *Existenz*, the existential self, is wider and something more than simply relating to an objectively physical environment and thereby embraces more than scientific knowledge?<sup>255</sup> Indeed as even Aristotle (384-322 bc) said: 'the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is ever the subject of doubt is, what is Being'.<sup>256</sup> From the outset it is possible to answer that Being, is *the* philosophical question cited in the Introduction: What is there? 'Being' is the reason why anything at all can 'be',<sup>257</sup> the 'order' that anything at all 'is'.<sup>258</sup> But this is a somewhat abstract concept. Can anything more be said to enhance the clarity of the terminology? It can.

In accordance with the earlier sense of the 'being' of objects available to human consciousness, it may now be added that '*Being*' is *what makes those objects something that are not nothing*. These individual objects confronted in consciousness are said to be particular 'beings', i.e. spare, individuated, differentiated often solid material things. But critically, these individual object can occur only within a wider "horizon" which is non-objectively but implicitly mixed up with a grasp of the subject-object dichotomy.<sup>259</sup> So the notion of Being, capitalised to denote Being per se not individual 'beings' or things (the reader might wish to recall fn 6), in these terms of reference, is generally accepted as not being a special sort of *entity*.<sup>260</sup> The notion of Being is not to be understood as a class

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<sup>254</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, 10.

<sup>255</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', 130.

<sup>256</sup> Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1028b, cited in K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 53. Jaspers also approvingly goes on to cite the German philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, arguing that this question is 'the oldest and most correct explanation of what philosophy is'.

<sup>257</sup> G. Morley, *John Macquarrie's Natural Theology*, 111.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>259</sup> Entry for 'Being', in K. Rahner & H. Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1983), 45-46.

<sup>260</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Being', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, (London: Routledge, 1998), 699.

of things, or even the broadest and most expansive and capacious class there is.<sup>261</sup> To refer to Being is not to refer directly to the existence of individuated examples of ‘beings’ or ‘things’ in the form of the numerous objects conjectured to make up the world in the Introduction. It is important to realise that this Being is not these many ‘things’, but the *a priori* condition of any and all particular ‘bits’ of knowledge,<sup>262</sup> without which no comprehension or analysis or comparison of the objects of consciousness and scientific theorising would be possible.

What does *a priori* mean in this context? ‘*A priori*’ comes from the Latin meaning “from what comes before” and refers to that which is known deductively, that is to say it is inferred from one or more premises, and in this context it means that Being is posited as the ever present but undefined means by which one or more objects can be distinguished, as though something ‘infinite’ was present to allow the comprehension of finite things. Indeed as Aristotle also suggested: ‘It is not possible that either unity or being should be a single genus of things’.<sup>263</sup> And hence from Aristotle through to the present day the ‘background’ of a particular object, to recall again Searle’s term from the Introduction, is called Being.<sup>264</sup> And hence there is relevance in the definition of Being provided by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger in his classic work *Being and Time*:

Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its ‘universality’ is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple.*<sup>265</sup>

In view of providing a ‘context’ in which human consciousness may sift and sort and comprehend the various objects of the world, Being can also be termed what Lonergan

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<sup>261</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 163-168.

<sup>262</sup> Entry for ‘Being’, in K. Rahner & H. Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 45-46.

<sup>263</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 163-168.

<sup>264</sup> K. Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 243.

<sup>265</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 62. Law also cites Heidegger in his presentation of Jaspers’ cipher philosophy, precisely to clarify a concept that is difficult to conceive (See D. Law, 2001, 166).

usefully called the ‘supreme heuristic notion. Prior to every content, it is the notion of the to-be-known through that content’.<sup>266</sup> What does the idea of a ‘supreme heuristic notion’ mean? ‘Heuristic’ by definition means ‘serving to find out’<sup>267</sup> and so ‘Being’ is the means by which it is possible to stand apart from objects and discover an independent world. In these senses ‘Being’ is the fundamental condition of individuated existence. Being has therefore been termed by an interpreter of Jaspers the ‘representation of being itself *beyond* all objectivity’.<sup>268</sup> It sounds like a difficult notion to conceptualise adequately, and indeed it is. As Jaspers suggests:

Thus, if I want to advance to being, I do not get there if I mean all things and thoughts in the sense of objective being; nor if I mean subjective being; nor if I aim at the existential subject as free being; nor if I take extant being and free being outwardly together (for they really have nothing in common, nothing I might think of as identical). Being that is to encompass all being is transcendent.<sup>269</sup>

The final sentence provides the first explicit clue to the close relation of the terms *Being*, *Transcendence* and the word *God*, and makes clear the need to grasp these senses of what ‘Being’ means if the word *God* is to be understood.<sup>270</sup> For various reasons what has been referred to as ‘Being’ is most appropriately termed ‘Transcendence’. In the *first place*, as the occasion of human self-questioning in finitude, it is *sui generis*, of a fundamentally different order from all the available and conventional properties of objects; it is thus ‘outside’ the subject-object dichotomy, it therefore ‘lies at the basis of everything’, and as *the* condition of everything else.<sup>271</sup> In other words, Transcendence is that which does not apply to the limited sphere of object-being, but which at the same is a necessary condition

<sup>266</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 207.

<sup>267</sup> *SOED*, 959.

<sup>268</sup> R. F. Grabau, Preface to K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, xxi. My emphasis.

<sup>269</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 38.

<sup>270</sup> Entry for ‘Being’, in K. Rahner & H. Vorgrimmler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 45-46.

<sup>271</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 163-168. A neat citation showing how Jaspers conflates the terms in practice is: ‘Being itself is the Transcendence which shows itself to no investigative experience, not even indirectly. It is that which as the absolute Encompassing just as certainly “is” as it remains unseen and unknown’ (See K. Jaspers, 1956, 60). It might be useful for the reader to consider the notion of the Encompassing as a derivative of an earlier sense described by the great Greek philosopher, Plato (c. 428-c. 347 bc). For Plato that there must be an ‘ideality’ that is an encompassing unity of all that is perceivable (See G. Knauss, ‘The Concept of the ‘Encompassing’ in Jaspers’ *Philosophy*’, 154).



of each and any particular being. Transcendence is metaphysically necessary for there to be the facade of objects available to human scrutiny. This notion that there exists something infinite to account for finite appearances is often what people term ‘God’, the “Transcendent One”, spoken of in terms of perfect attributes like infinitude, immutability, omniscience, and omnipotence.<sup>272</sup>

K. Lehmann writes in *Sacramentum Mundi* that ‘the classical notion of transcendence is multivalent, and is generally used indifferently: (i) to indicate the relationship by which beings are referred to “being”; (ii) to indicate the relationship of changeable beings to one higher which is at rest; (iii) to indicate the “supreme being” itself, which is also called “being”’.<sup>273</sup> In Jaspers’ words:

This Being itself which we feel as indicated at the limits, and which therefore is the last thing we reach through questioning from our situation, is in itself the first. It is not made by us, is not interpretation, and is not an object. Rather it itself brings forth our questioning and permits it no rest.<sup>274</sup>

Jaspers, thus dissatisfied with the findings of science went on to ask what holds the various objects together, makes possible their differentiation from the subjects trying to understand them. Hence that which cannot be grasped but which ‘makes grasping possible’ Jaspers terms the *Encompassing*:<sup>275</sup> the inconceivable totality of all subjects and all objects but which is itself *neither subject nor object*.<sup>276</sup> In his *Reason and Existenz* lectures Jaspers comments:

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<sup>272</sup> The reader might also like to consider that the ‘little word ‘god’ comes to us in English and related languages from an Indo-Germanic root which means ‘to call upon someone’...Radically, to utter the little word ‘God’ is to *pray*, to acknowledge our dependence and reliance on a power and a presence totally beyond us and unutterably near to us’ (See R. Woods, 1998, 132-133). Here, it is alleged by many religious traditions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity is the supreme and transcendent Being that encompasses all forms of limited existence: Yahweh, Allah, the God that lies as the ultimate cause and root of all.

<sup>273</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for ‘Transcendence’, *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 6, (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), 277.

<sup>274</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 59.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>276</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 23.

In order to see most clearly into what is true and real, into what is no longer fastened to any particular thing or colored by any particular atmosphere, we must push into the widest possible range. And then we experience the following: everything that is an object for us, even though it be the greatest, is still always within another, it is not yet all. Wherever we arrive, the horizon which includes the attained itself goes further and forces us to give up any final rest. We can secure no standpoint from which a closed whole of Being would be surveyable, nor any sequence of standpoints through whose totality Being would be given even indirectly. We always live and think within a horizon. But the very fact that it is a horizon indicates something further which again surrounds the given horizon. From this situation arises the question about the Encompassing. The Encompassing is not a horizon within which every determinate mode of Being and truth emerges for us, but rather that within which every particular horizon is enclosed as in something absolutely comprehensive which is no longer visible as a horizon at all.<sup>277</sup>

In words of clarification, the Encompassing is the central aspect of Jaspers' thought. One of what Jaspers calls the *immanent modes* of the Encompassing is the abstract, rational and conceptual object-understanding expounded in the Introduction whereby the subject comes to know a world around it in answer to the question 'what is there'. As part of the obvious world of physical regularity this level of awareness was termed Dasein. This is the world as described by the sciences, yielding public and verifiable knowledge that satisfies the demand for external validation.<sup>278</sup> Here the findings of sentient consciousness are tallied in the 'magnificent drafts' produced by science and provide what Jaspers calls 'consciousness-as-such', the agreed epistemic basis on which science and philosophy, and humanity stand. In view of not being limited to this level of sentient-biological awareness the person is also conceived as possible Existenz, a term used to denote the strivings of the individual as they existentially encounter transcendent depths across a broad range of experience states. Hence Existenz is necessarily reliant on there being more to the world than objective appearance. As has been noted, Jaspers describes Transcendence, this idea of 'surrounding Being', with the term 'the Encompassing'. As Grabau makes clear, the Encompassing is:

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<sup>277</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 51-52.

<sup>278</sup> R. F. Grabau, Preface to K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, xviii.

Jaspers' name for the form of our awareness of being which underlies all our scientific and common-sense knowledge and which is given expression in the myths and rituals of religion. But it can never become an object. Awareness of the encompassing is achieved by reflection upon our situation. As we reflect, we realize that all objects we are aware of, including religious ones, are determinate beings situated in a larger, encompassing context or horizon.<sup>279</sup>

Being, Transcendence, God, the Encompassing, all denote that which is ultimate, the foundation for any particular concepts, but which can never be grasped. Hence although Jaspers uses the term quite specifically it does not actually denote any kind of clear objective content.<sup>280</sup>

Transcendence is not defined in categories; it does not exist as empirical reality; nor does it lie in the presence of my freedom as such. It is thus not in any of the modes of being that lend themselves to objectively articulated thought, or to cognition as existence which I have to take for granted, or to elucidation in an appeal to my potential...Transcendence is the reality an Existenz will ask for, but to ask for it in generally valid terms is impossible. It is impossible because transcendence strikes me as a reality without possibility, as the absolute reality beyond which there is nothing. Before transcendence I stand mute.<sup>281</sup>

It ought to be clear by now that whatever the Encompassing is, and however, if at all, it comes to be known by Existenz, it is not, as Knauss neatly concludes, a 'heap of all existing things'.<sup>282</sup> It is the ground and cause within and beyond all that can be said about anything.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, xv. Or as Knauss suggests, for Jaspers, all philosophizing is a philosophizing of the Encompassing, a 'thinking from out of totality' (See G. Knauss, 'The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 141).

<sup>280</sup> W. Earle's Introduction: K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 10.

<sup>281</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 9.

<sup>282</sup> G. Knauss, 'The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 142. Being is not the 'summation of totality of beings' (See S. Samay, 1971, 57).

<sup>283</sup> As Jaspers characteristically says: 'Thus, when I want to know what being is, it appears to me *disjoint*, the more so the more relentlessly I keep asking, and the less I let myself be deceived by some construction of being. I do not have *the* being anywhere; I always have only *a* being...it does not become the whole of a gist expressed in all the modes of being, much less a *specific being* with the distinction of emerging as the source of all things. Whenever I try to grasp being *qua* being, I fail' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 3-4). Hence

## EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO TRANSCENDENCE

It was clear from Jaspers' demarcation of the proper scope of science that its approach to existence is unable to answer the deeper question implied by the notion of the transcendent Being that appears to encompass existence. Science is explanatorily mute in this regard because intentional consciousness always aims at a particular aspect of existence, not this apparent underlying unity which makes different 'beings' possible in the first place. An effort was then made to admit and begin to justify explanatory closure in respect of what science is able to tell the person, not only about their world, but also about the complexity and richness of human experience. In other words, an argument was presented for an *a posteriori* engagement with existence at the limits of scientific cogency precisely as it fails to adequately fathom this apparent encompassing ground. It therefore presented the absolute insistence that the experiential-qualitative, and the existential self, or Existenz, must be included in any account that seeks an answer to the question 'what is there'. Nevertheless, recent intellectual history has seen two markedly different approaches to the question of Transcendence that arguably place a different valuation on phenomenal experience. Focusing critically on the methods and analysis of Rahner and Lonergan as they seek to conceive and provide an explanation of Transcendence will aptly contrast and highlight their sharp variance to Jaspers' philosophy. Their own strategies will serve as a counterpoint for the examination of Jaspers' cipher philosophy of Transcendence.

### 1. KARL RAHNER: THE TRANSCENDENT SUBJECT

Like Jaspers, so for Rahner, reality remains the one and only starting point for knowledge of Transcendence.<sup>284</sup> And also similarly, human enquiry is only possible within and against a metaphysical backdrop. What does that mean? 'Metaphysics' often refers to the

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Jaspers' insistence that Being is 'always defined in reference to *something else*' (See K. Jaspers, 2003, 78). My emphasis.

<sup>284</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations, Volume XIII: Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), 131.

idea that material reality is transcended, surpassed by an even more fundamental reality or 'backdrop' than 'visible', physical existence. This was called Being or Transcendence or the Encompassing in the previous chapter. Rahner expresses this well in *Hearer of the Word* where the following citation aptly sums up one of his philosophical preoccupations:

what is the ultimate reason why we can confront the things with which we deal in our knowing-judging as well as our free activity with such a power of self-subsistence? We have explained above how knowing consists essentially in a unification with what is known. How then must we grasp these things, in our knowing and acting, so that this grasping, instead of leading up to judgement and freedom, i.e., to knowing self-subsistence, may not turn into a being-grasped by the things with which knowledge unifies us? What is...the *a priori* transcendental condition of the possibility of this self-subsistence?<sup>285</sup>

Indeed, Lehmann's description of Transcendence advanced above (p. 60) was cited because it arguably reflects the approach to the question of an '*a priori* transcendental condition of the possibility of this self-subsistence' espoused by Rahner. In each of the three points of his definition the significance of a 'being' is always discussed *referentially*, it is referred to 'something else', to Being *from* flux, *from* phenomenality and instability to an unchangeable Being that is 'at rest', and finally conceived as the "supreme being". Why does this reflect the thought of Rahner? Essentially because when the notion of experience was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One it was conjectured to be central to deciding about the nature of existence, indeed was seen as fundamental to it, and often vexing the human attempts to describe it *post factum*, or after the event. While Rahner did not reject experience as a category, the central drive of his philosophical theology was to postulate this *a priori* transcendental condition or datum<sup>286</sup> which is somehow present to the person and that discloses something central to what it means to be human:

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<sup>285</sup> K. Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Continuum, 1994), 44.

<sup>286</sup> K-H. Weger, *Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Theology*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 18.

Human activity is free. But there can *a priori* be freedom only where as acting subjects we occupy a position that is independent of the position of the object of our actions. Because in our judgements we return completely into ourselves, thus occupying a position opposed to and independent of the objects of our knowledge, we are free before this object and can freely act upon it.<sup>287</sup>

What does it mean to 'postulate an *a priori* datum'? *A priori*, as noticed earlier means literally 'what comes before' and can refer to acquiring knowledge that is *not dependent on experience*. What Rahner has in mind is a particular observation of the conditions that precede any association with objects and particulars in a non-temporal sense, however deep or significant such an experience might be. Rahner is trying to articulate something that is absolutely fundamental, and prior to, any possible experience of the world, which was described above, once again, as the notion of transcendent Being or the Encompassing. It is this 'innate element preceding all that is acquired in the world of experience'<sup>288</sup> to which Rahner turned in what has been termed the *transcendental anthropological method*.<sup>289</sup> To use the metaphor advanced by Karl-Heinz Weger, there is something ultimate that is implied in the experience of the particular, so as to say, the human person finds themselves on a beach with the sea stretching towards an infinite mystery. The central claim is that the person's primary task is not to be busy with the grains of sand (particular experiences) that are found on the beach,<sup>290</sup> but to appreciate the significance of the wider experience that makes it possible for them to experience the sand at all. To put it another way, the appeal previously made to *a posteriori* experience in its many and diffuse forms is less important than noticing the infinite ocean stretching in all directions, this alleged *a priori* constitution that makes any knowing whatsoever possible at all.

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<sup>287</sup> K. Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 43.

<sup>288</sup> K-H. Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 19.

<sup>289</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology*, (Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1993), 265. Duffy continues, the 'transcendental method, the key theme of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, denotes an investigation of human knowing. It is much less concerned with what happens when objects are presented to our cognitive faculties than with reflexive awareness of what the *a priori* conditions that make knowing possible are and how it is that the mind knows more than the senses perceive'. Further, as Rahner comments, 'Being is an analogous concept and this analogy shows in the purely analogical way in which every single being returns to itself, can be present to itself' (See K. Rahner, 1994, 37).

<sup>290</sup> K-H. Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 20.

Rahner terms this *a priori* constitution 'transcendental'. Why is that? Strictly speaking because it is a latent ever present supra-historical enabling condition, which in its open-ended character can point the individual towards the question of Transcendence or 'God'. Such a claim posits certain very specific conditions that 'must be present for man to be able to do this or that particular thing, act in this or that way or experience himself and his life in this or that manner?'<sup>291</sup> In this sense Rahner stands, more or less in a tradition of thought that links Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) in the fifteenth century, and onwards through René Descartes (1596-1650), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), who have all variously substantiated the notion that the *cosmos is not the point of departure* on the road to explaining God.<sup>292</sup> As he again comments in *Hearer of the Word*:

It follows that the question of the condition of the possibility of this self-subsistence is one or more element of the analytic study of what is already implicitly co-affirmed in this first starting point of all metaphysical questioning...The human person is the being, the first being who can perform in consciousness a complete return to itself.<sup>293</sup>

Cusanus, through Hegel and into Rahner during the twentieth century all stand as clarification of a switch that has taken place in which the question of Transcendence has not been approached cosmologically, as evident from the array of matter 'out there' but according to a close analysis of anthropology.<sup>294</sup> By examining the person closely Rahner posited a transcendent basis to all particular *a posteriori* experience:

It follows that we are not absolute consciousness, but, precisely in our metaphysics, hence as "transcendental consciousness," *finite spirits*...This absolute consciousness does not come to itself in us, not even in our transcendental consciousness. When we feel that

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. As Rahner characteristically expressed elsewhere 'I would like to try and say a few words about the possibility of belief today. I mean the possibility of belief in the infinite, unspeakable mystery we call God – of belief in the fact that this infinite mystery, as *our* mystery...' (See K. Rahner, 1966, 3).

<sup>292</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 11-12. Chapter Four of *Hearer of the Word* is characteristically titled: 'The Analogy of Being, The Knowing Self-Subsistence of the Human Person as Starting Point for a Metaphysical Anthropology' (See K. Rahner, 1994, 35).

<sup>293</sup> K. Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 44.

<sup>294</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, (Michigan: WB Eerdmans, 1991), 89.

we have to inquire about being...we show the finiteness of our spirit, in such a way, however, that the question reveals that being is, of itself, self-presence, luminosity, the original unity of knowing and being known.<sup>295</sup>

Indeed, it is becoming clear that for Rahner the very acquaintance of the person with their world *presupposes* a somewhat 'hidden' additional element, part of the structural fabric that constitutes the knower. In this sense Transcendence 'is reality and man is only a transcendental subject because this transcendence exists. In a word, this transcendence is another and more original name for God'.<sup>296</sup> As such it is impossible to adequately grasp this transcendental constitution, and so it can never be reflected upon completely. It is possible to be fully and contemplatively immersed in a world of objects and the experiences they manifest, but the transcendental method described by Rahner does not lead in a direct way to specific claims about the content of such experiences. An *a priori* datum is thus not an explicit datum of knowledge and so it is difficult to think about. In *The Spirit in the Church* Rahner described the situation as follows:

The movement of the mind or spirit towards the individual object with which he is concerned always aims at the particular object by passing beyond it. The individually and specifically and objectively known thing is always grasped in a broader, unnamed, implicitly present horizon of possible knowledge...Every object of our conscious mind which we encounter in our social world and environment, as it announces itself as it were of itself, is merely a stage, a constantly new starting point in this movement which continues into the everlasting and unnamed "before us".<sup>297</sup>

The apparent argument being that here, wrapped up in particular acts of knowledge, is the experience of an *a priori* transcendent ground that is more significant than concrete and particular experience. It is immediately clear therefore that such an approach is markedly different to that of Jaspers' existentialism and the earlier insistence on the careful contemplative attention it was suggested should be afforded the many and richly and deeply varied classes of experience. It points at a deep contrast between the two

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<sup>295</sup> K. Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 40.

<sup>296</sup> K-H. Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 27.

<sup>297</sup> K. Rahner, *The Spirit in the World*, Translated by W. Dych, S.J., (New York, Continuum, 1994), 12-13.



approaches and invites a series of criticisms centred in what Fergus Kerr aptly describes as the 'autonomy' of the Rahnerian subject.<sup>298</sup> What does such a criticism imply? Initially, it is arguably a downplaying of an important element of human existence: the actual *a posteriori* experience of depth phenomena. In Rahner's theory the individual can simply feel somewhat abraded by sensory experience, but at that exact moment the same person is *already* 'constituted' as a subject with an implicit ever present capability for the absolute, for Transcendence.<sup>299</sup> Space permits some consequent criticisms.

Kerr cites the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth in a related context that is an appropriate criticism of Rahner. Barth commented on the nature of 'proving the existence of a being whom *I* have conjured up only by means of my own self-transcendence, *I* shall again and again succeed only in proving my own existence'.<sup>300</sup> Here what can be termed 'self-presence' is somewhat automatically, ipso facto, necessarily, an apparent openness to Transcendence.<sup>301</sup> It occurs independently of the person's existential 'decision'. This native transcendentality of the human person is central to Rahner, and his view that the person is 'a transcendent being insofar as all of his knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of "being" as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality'.<sup>302</sup> In other words, Transcendence as unthematic is conceived, as has been clarified, not through qualitative personalised contact with the depths of Being, but through an *a priori* instant always present to human knowing,<sup>303</sup> and one that is yielded in throwing light not on experience *per se*, but on the basic, constant structural elements that underwrite the intense variables of possible human experience.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>298</sup> F. Kerr, 'The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology', 26.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>300</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>302</sup> K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, Translated by W. V. Dych, (London: DLT, 1978), 33.

<sup>303</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*, 265.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 266. Illustratively, the reader might also find it helpful to note the comments of W. Pannenberg in this regard, 'that which can become the explicit object of religious consciousness is implicitly present in every turning to a particular object of our experience' (See W. Pannenberg, 1985, 72).

It therefore follows that Transcendence in these terms is understood, perhaps not as a direct experience within the rich “givenness” of the world but, rather, in these somewhat dense and abstract requisites as the asymptotic goal of human striving.<sup>305</sup> What exactly does Stephen Duffy mean by an asymptotic goal? The use of the word ‘asymptotic’ is actually intuitively appealing. An ‘asymptote’ is ‘a line which continually approaches a given curve, but does not meet it within a finite distance’.<sup>306</sup> In Rahner’s anthropological conception of Transcendence it means to say that God is ever perpetually intended by the subject, but which they never completely arrive at or become really explicitly conscious of, except presumably in an eternity of space in which the constitutive relation of the subject to ‘God’ is finally disclosed. It is a method in which the content of the known, to be esteemed in the later presentation of Jaspers’ cipher-theory, is subordinate to the significance of this strictly cognitive forewarning or premonition of the encompassing ground of being.<sup>307</sup>

In these senses this style of ‘self-awareness in the act of thinking’ is invariably Rahner’s preferred explanatory route to demonstrating Transcendence in theology.<sup>308</sup> But by adopting a demonstration of Transcendence with a degree of theoretical abstraction, Rahner is arguably attempting to occupy a standpoint outside an immersion in the unique experiential particulars, outside a rich, bodily, historical, even institutional setting, variously revered as potential experiences in the Introduction and that are alleged to be realisable by the existential self, by Existenz. Indeed a brief reading of Rahner’s theology reveals so many opening epistemological comments and preliminaries,<sup>309</sup> and the obscurity of Rahner’s prose being proverbial,<sup>310</sup> that the subsequent theory is often obtuse. It is usually so conceptually metaphysical and abstract and as Kerr suggests, his sentences so ‘carapaced with qualifications’<sup>311</sup> that the question of Transcendence, of God and of an experience of Being in depth phenomenon appear secondary to this

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>306</sup> *SOED*, 123.

<sup>307</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*, 268.

<sup>308</sup> F. Kerr, ‘The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology’, 28.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>310</sup> R. Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 205. Likened by Duffy to riding a bicycle through sand dunes! (See S. J. Duffy, 1993, 261).

<sup>311</sup> F. Kerr, ‘The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology’, 28.

tangential insistence of the “absolute”, perhaps even *anonymously* experienced, referring always to ‘that absolute which is, however “anonymously,” the deity itself’.<sup>312</sup> Where as terms like “transcendental” and “transcendent” have conventionally referred to Being, to the existence of God beyond finite categories, in Rahner terminology, they now also apply to the constitution of the person, with the caveat that close attention to the human structure will demonstrate a transcendent component. It means that to be a person:

means the self-possession of a subject as such in a conscious and free relationship to the totality of itself. This relationship is the condition of possibility and the antecedent horizon for the fact that in his individual empirical experiences and in his individual sciences man has to do with himself as one and as a whole.<sup>313</sup>

The net result of a theological anthropology of this kind is that clearly ‘the Rahnerian self turns out to be nothing less than “pure openness for absolutely everything”’<sup>314</sup> along with the codicil that God is ever the somewhat dimly conceived “whither” of the innate human capacity for Transcendence. It is an influence arguably conditioned by the influence on Rahner of Belgian Jesuit, and founder of transcendental Thomism, Joseph Maréchal:

A cardinal thesis of Maréchal was that the condition of the possibility of the objectivity of the contents of consciousness in judgements must be the thrusting of the knowing subject beyond all concepts to the plenitude of pure act...All thinking must *begin* from the absolute...We come full circle. The absolute is alpha and omega; the absolute end of the thinker as subject is a constitutive element in the thinker’s every judgement.<sup>315</sup>

Here is the ‘endless demonstration of the endless’, exhibited in a drawing of the lines and contours of the theoretical superstructure that apparently constitutes human existence, and which makes knowledge possible. Here, then, is an implicit orientation away from free and open experience *per se*, from the senses, from an immersion in the deep experiential realities of the world and the apparent profundity of just existing in a world

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<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. The reader might find it helpful to note that he rather infamously referred to the ‘salvation’ of people outside Christianity, thus having no direct experience of classical revelation, i.e. the self-communicative disclosure of God, “anonymous Christians”.

<sup>313</sup> K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 30.

<sup>314</sup> F. Kerr, ‘The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology’, 29.

<sup>315</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*, 263-273.

of phenomenal richness and colour and possibility, of sight and sound, of feeling and intuition. But what if, as Kerr asks pointedly, 'our relation to our physical and social setting is a matter for gratitude and celebration...The idea that it is by leaving the world that one finds oneself is an ancient and a very alluring one, but...is it the most productive way of regarding ourselves, particularly from a Christian theological perspective?'<sup>316</sup> Kerr's unease is perhaps crystallised in the summary words of Weger:

the categorical world is the limit of my knowledge – an idea that was taken up in a fundamental way by the critical rationalists. Man is only able to know what is finite. Man is, in his possibility of knowing, a prisoner on his finite nature and the conceptions characterised by Kant as ideas (God – man – world) only act as an incentive to man's restlessness to escape from his limited world of experience.<sup>317</sup>

Whilst Jaspers was neither Christian nor a theologian, his philosophy offers in comparison a profoundly alternative and productive theory of Transcendence. And in so doing he describes how the person may ask 'what is there' and arrive at something more than theoretical conclusions that purport to demonstrate the existence of an extra-subjective dimension that all life is contingent upon. Jaspers purports to show how an *actual experience of Transcendence* is possible.

## 2. BERNARD LONERGAN: COGNITIONAL THEORY

Rahner's attentive turn towards the dynamic structure of the subject has a parallel in the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan. Like Rahner, Lonergan similarly held that an adequate response to the problems of existence, the equivalent Jaspers' 'where does a person obtain guidance' (p. 22), involves recovering the truth of Transcendence.<sup>318</sup> But once again, like Rahner, his strategy for pursuing Transcendence is a markedly different project to that of Jaspers. What did Lonergan propose? His original preface to his

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<sup>316</sup> F. Kerr, 'The Modern Philosophy of Self in Recent Theology', 31. A citation from Duffy's discussion of Rahner provides a neat example of what Kerr appears to mean: 'The intellect through its powers of abstraction must liberate one from the immersion in the sensible world so that one not only *feels*, but comes to *think* the material objects grasped in the senses' (See S. J. Duffy, 1993, 270-271).

<sup>317</sup> K-H. Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 58.

<sup>318</sup> G. Hughes, *Transcendence and History: The Search for Ultimacy from Ancient Societies to Postmodernity*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 29.

extraordinary work *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding*, Lonergan's formidable philosophical text, provides a stylish clue and point of contrasts to Jaspers:

Rational self-consciousness is a peak above the clouds. Intelligent and reasonable, responsible and free, scientific and metaphysical, it stands above romantic spontaneity and the psychological depths, historical determinism and social engineering, the disconcerted existential subject and the undeciphered symbols of the artist and modernist.<sup>319</sup>

Hence somewhat unlike Jaspers, for Lonergan, the primary concern was not so much what can be known, what is 'out there', so to speak, but with the nature of knowing.<sup>320</sup> Lonergan developed a theory about the nature of cognition that produced what he argued was an important metaphysical insight. Starting his philosophy by paying close attention to what happens when something is known he discerned a 'supervening act of understanding'.<sup>321</sup> He saw it as an act that was at work in grasping the physical reality of existence described in the Introduction above, and each and any and all subsequent acts of understanding. Through the dynamical self-appropriation of rational self-consciousness, Lonergan claims to be able to demonstrate other metaphysical realities necessarily implicated in coming to know, in the framework of the present thesis, particular 'things'. In other words, Lonergan studied what happens when intelligence returns upon itself analytically. Like Rahner, it is a matter of noticing what happens when intelligence becomes self-aware and self-reflective. It was a strategy in stark counter position to his intellectual nemesis, namely the notion that knowing something is a matter of 'taking a 'look at' it'.<sup>322</sup> Instead, claimed Lonergan, an accurate, thoroughgoing and comprehensive 'knowledge of knowledge'<sup>323</sup> yields an 'apprehension of relations'<sup>324</sup> that begin with self-appropriation and that can be traced through cognitive theory to

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<sup>319</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 33.

<sup>320</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), xviii.

<sup>321</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, ix.

<sup>322</sup> T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight: A Comprehensive Commentary*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 2003), 226.

<sup>323</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, x.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

metaphysics, from metaphysics to ethics and finally to an argument for the existence of a transcendent ground and basis to the universe commonly called God.<sup>325</sup>

To be maximally concise about what is a technically daunting and theoretically massive programme, Lonergan's cognitional theory conjectures an isomorphism between the *structure of knowing* and the *known*, meaning that if the spirit of enquiry is followed in its natural dynamism, it will, in the long run, demonstrate Transcendence.<sup>326</sup> What exactly does this mean? T. J. Tekippe, a contemporary apologist for Lonergan's cognitional theory provides an appealing analogy by suggesting that knowing 'is the key to which the universe is the lock. By examining the key, it is possible to fix certain main features of the lock'.<sup>327</sup> He means to say that a rigorous and disciplined attention to exactly what happens and holds and pertains in any act of knowing will produce a metaphysic that will show something significant about the basic structure of reality.<sup>328</sup> One of the many things it means, that may help the reader appreciate Lonergan's polemical intentions, is that, in the picture of the theory, consciousness is always aspiring to higher viewpoints,<sup>329</sup> but it can only do so if it is able to take possession of an unrevisable ground.<sup>330</sup>

A brief presentation of the Transcendental Method summarised by R. J. Grace will help clarify Lonergan's significance in this regard. A human being is an incessant questioner, think even of a child constantly asking things like "Why?", "How come?", "What is that?", "Why is that so...?" These are questions that constitute a potentially endless process. And recall for a moment the elements involved in actually knowing something: there is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshalling and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking and writing.<sup>331</sup> The first five sensorial aspects can be directed intentionally at a particular object or field of objects. But subsequently,

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<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

<sup>326</sup> G. Hughes, *Transcendence and History*, 18.

<sup>327</sup> T. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan*, 115.

<sup>328</sup> T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*, 9.

<sup>329</sup> Correspondence with Dr Paul Allen (15/03/2004).

<sup>330</sup> Editors Notes, M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 179.

<sup>331</sup> R. J. Grace, 'The Transcendental Method of Bernard Lonergan', Lonergan Web Site, <http://www.lonergan.concordia.ca/reprints/grace-method.htm> (09/07/07), and B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (London: DLT, 1972), 6.

each of these different elements occurs at different levels of consciousness implied in the drive for a higher viewpoint. In fact there are four distinct levels: the empirical-sensual, the intellectual – inquiry, understanding and expression, the rational – reflecting and judging truth from falsity, and finally at a responsible level, in applying what has come to be known. In summary form:

The emergence of higher systems or higher viewpoints comes about because lower systems can no longer adequately deal with the questions and insights they generate. (Lonergan uses the example of the emergence of algebra from arithmetic.) There is a shift that takes place within the knower. The lower viewpoint does not logically lead to the higher viewpoint. Rather, the higher viewpoint emerges because of the limits of the lower viewpoint. Thus, understanding develops through the accumulation of insights leading to clusters of insights that form a system. Limits are reached within that system producing the need for one to transcend those limits. Eventually a higher system is formed from the questions and insights that result directly from awareness of the limits of the lower system. This means that there are two quite different manners in which understanding develops. The first comes about through the accumulation of insights in a straightforward, linear manner. The second departs from that logical sequence and shifts the knower to a higher level. The former is a springboard for the latter. It leads one to recognize the need for a higher viewpoint.<sup>332</sup>

In other words, consciousness is naturally ‘aspirational’ and is ever implying a new viewpoint from which to make sense of the knowing process. In the long run, this viewpoint encounters what would come to be termed a transcendent ground. Here again is an immediate juxtaposition and contrast with Jaspers’ approach to Transcendence. For Lonergan what is fundamental about the individual’s existentiality is not this or that particular experience but that consciousness is incessantly moving towards, incessantly tending towards Transcendence, towards Being,<sup>333</sup> towards ‘God’, which involves an implicitly different valuation of experience to the one articulated in the Introduction. For Lonergan consciousness is simply this prior activity rather than the secondary

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<sup>332</sup> Entry for ‘Viewpoints’: Glossary Project, Lonergan Web Site, [www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary\\_m-z.htm](http://www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary_m-z.htm) (09/07/07).

<sup>333</sup> W. F. Ryan & B. J. Tyrrell, *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 14.

experiential content,<sup>334</sup> it is simply something 'given' before it is *affirmed*,<sup>335</sup> and is therefore seen as only an initial activity,<sup>336</sup> upon which reflection can then take its bearings. This is intuitively well expressed by his comments that perceiving the world 'is a function not only of position relative to an object, of the intensity of the light, of the healthiness of eyes, but also of interest, anticipation, and activity'.<sup>337</sup> Remarks which make it clear that for Lonergan experience is only the first of three critical stages that only as a composite can characterise human knowing. Understanding and judgement must follow 'experience'.

Lonergan's approach to what was termed in the Introduction the 'science and religion debate' also functions as a solid example. Whereas Jaspers was seen above to be content to sketch the limits of science before invoking a sublime theory of ciphers, and Peacocke was alleged to be content to drive science to its limits of description and infer Transcendence from that point, as will be discussed and analysed in Chapter Four, for Lonergan a scientific comprehension of objective reality performed a different service. Science provides only a variable set of contents<sup>338</sup> with which to examine the implicit cognitive hierarchy. As he characteristically suggests:

while the content of the known cannot be disregarded, still it is to be treated only in the schematic and incomplete fashion needed to provide a discriminant or determinant of cognitive acts.<sup>339</sup>

Hence he once described the religious responders to the advance of science as arriving on the scene a little breathless and late,<sup>340</sup> whilst calmly noting that scientific advance merely serves to provide material to continually establish the efficacy of cognitional theory, which could supply the necessary argument for Transcendence that religiously minded scientists failed to provide. In other words, science provides only a *variable*

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<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>335</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 187.

<sup>336</sup> T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*, 170.

<sup>337</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 115. For Lonergan whatever *is to be known* about the world is indissolubly tied to particular *postures* and *activities* and *inclinations* of the knower (See T. J. Tekippe, 2003, 95).

<sup>338</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 733.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>340</sup> T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*, 408.



*content*, a ‘discriminant’ which can continually be assimilated in the *invariant metaphysics* necessary to any and all acts of understanding. This is, finally, how Transcendence could be ‘argued for’.

Lonergan’s approach to the question of Transcendence has the significant intellectual benefits, in contrast to Jaspers, of advancing a method aimed at realising the metaphysical basis of Transcendence in an empirically verifiable manner.<sup>341</sup> What does this mean? It means that Lonergan’s approach can be termed immanently epistemological<sup>342</sup> in that it arrives at a demonstration of Transcendence through the close and apparently lifelong scrutiny of all those diverse cognitive acts that are necessary to knowing *anything in particular*. In other words, a question as large as ‘what is there’ or ‘is there anything that can be termed Transcendence’ can be arrived at by closely attending what happens when the many little acts come together to make the question possible. Or as J. Lear puts it, it is a reflection on ordinary human activity which yields a nonempirical insight into them.<sup>343</sup> Lonergan claims to have made a special insight into human cognition that reveals some remarkable facts about existence, namely its dependence on a transcendent ground.

It follows that really to answer the question ‘what is there?’ involves a lifelong and disciplined act of self-appropriation, an intending to one’s very own intending. The imperatives that characterise this enterprise Lonergan calls *transcendental precepts*. They are: 1. Be attentive to your experience. 2. Be intelligent in your inquiry into the meaning of that experience. 3. Be reasonable in your judgments of the accuracy of your understanding of your experience. 4. Be responsible in your decisions and subsequent actions based on the judgments of the accuracy of your understanding of your experience, and based also on the value/givenness of that reality.<sup>344</sup> It can then be said that:

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<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>342</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 167.

<sup>343</sup> J. Lear, *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul*, (Massachusetts: HUP, 1998), 281.

<sup>344</sup> Entry for ‘Transcendental Precepts’: Glossary Project, Lonergan Web Site, [www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary\\_m-z.htm](http://www.lonergan.concordia.ca/glossary_m-z.htm) (09/07/07).

The precepts are transcendental in that they cut across all categories and apply to every human activity. They specify the required form of all human behavior but without specifying its specific content. The transcendental precepts formulate the very dynamism of human consciousness or human spirit, whose ideal terminus is the universe of being.<sup>345</sup>

The key philosophical steps involve not a rich and sympathetic exploration of experiential content, but the structure and form, dynamism and spirit of the knowing process, suggesting that the whole force of Lonergan's theorising is to arrive conceptually via these dynamics at this 'universe of being', the highest viewpoint where questions cease. It means to say that the human person is far more than simply an organism 'extroverted' into a world constituted by raw experience, perhaps as Jaspers would describe, for the sake of contrast. Human intelligence *demand*s levels of engagement and analysis not strictly phenomenological, there is, for example, no requirement to try and 'intuit' Transcendence, the kind of mental operation to which Lonergan was fiercely opposed,<sup>346</sup> when a rational and deliberate attention to the apparatus of human knowledge clearly demonstrates Transcendence in an empirically verifiable way.

Without presenting more of an expansive and intricate theory it is perhaps sufficient to reiterate in the present thesis the earlier observation that knowing is not simply a matter of experience alone, but a composite of experiencing, *understanding*, *judging*, and *deciding* that take place in a wider context than the simple phenomenological contact with Transcendence Jaspers intends for his readers. Citations from Lonergan's *Method in Theology* can further amplify the nature of this argument. Here, in chapter four devoted to 'Religion' Lonergan comments:

We can inquire into the possibility of fruitful inquiry. We can reflect on the nature of reflection. We can deliberate whether our deliberating is worth while. In each case, there arises the question of God...So implicitly we grant that the universe is intelligible and, once that is granted, there arises the question whether the universe could be intelligible

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<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.* (09/07/07).

<sup>346</sup> T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*, 243.

without having an intelligent ground...Again, to reflect on the reflection is to ask just what happens when we marshal and weigh the evidence for pronouncing that this probably is so and that probably is not so.<sup>347</sup>

It is clear once again that the role of consciousness in its directly experiential posture is, for Lonergan, in subordinate position to other factors. The question of God 'rises out of our conscious intentionality, out of the *a priori* structured drive that promotes us from experiencing to the effort to understand'.<sup>348</sup> Phenomenal manifestations of Transcendence in the dense networks of human experience are decidedly secondary. Arguably therefore, the seminal difference between Jaspers' approach to Transcendence and that of Lonergan is that Jaspers advances a profoundly different move towards to the question in which *method* is deeply subordinate to what might be termed, as it was over-against Rahner's theory, experiential encounter with depth phenomena. In fact, as will imminently become clear, whereas Lonergan's method in theology stems from a close analysis of the epistemic superstructure implicit to cognition, Jaspers advances a view in which epistemological cogency is strikingly irrelevant to the question of encountering Transcendence in ciphers.

Perhaps one further contrast is possible, and one that is pertinent to (the majority of?) human beings in receipt of mental ability somewhere near the median on the spectrum of intelligence. Lonergan observes that there are no 'weekend celebrities'<sup>349</sup> in cognitional theory. He goes on to comment that some students are able to grasp the point of cognitional theory, but that many fall away. Tekippe suggests that even the brightest PhD. students cannot be taught the basics of *Insight* in the course of a year. Indeed as Lonergan rather flatly points out:

Some get the point before the teacher can finish his exposition. Others just manage to keep pace with him. Others see the point only when they go over the matter by

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<sup>347</sup> B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>349</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 111.

themselves. Some finally never catch on at all; for a while they follow the classes but, sooner or later, they drop away.<sup>350</sup>

In which case a question is pertinent: to whom is Lonergan's theory of Transcendence directed? Does it suggest an implicit elitism? It will arguably compel only those apparently few people capable of meeting its intellectual demands, those few who can adequately conceive the massive cerebral exigencies necessary for coming to terms with the structure of knowledge, and the apparent transcendent insights it is alleged to depend upon. In contrast, Jaspers offers a knowledge of Transcendence 'out there', confronting the person in their depth experiences, even in their innate conscious simplicity, as a genuine facet of subjectivity, and one that may well be missed or undervalued if it is routinely subordinated to the status of being a 'variable content', or fuel to burn only in the fires of the cognitive hierarchy.

### 3. APPROACHING TRANSCENDENCE: RAHNER, LONERGAN OR JASPERS?

Before looking at Jaspers' theory of ciphers in focussed detail in the next chapter, what can be said about these alternative approaches to Transcendence encountered to this point? Both Rahner and Lonergan provide what can be termed *transcendental arguments*. Transcendental arguments 'seek to answer scepticism by showing that the things doubted by a sceptic are in fact preconditions for the scepticism to make sense. Hence the scepticism is either meaningless or false'.<sup>351</sup> Such arguments, as the analysis has briefly clarified, seek to establish the preconditions necessary to thought, knowledge and judgement. And if a transcendent component can be demonstrated, it has in religious thought a theistic referent, in denoting or referring or pointing towards the notion of God.<sup>352</sup> But in so doing both styles of argument present a somewhat *abstract* and non-representational relationship with what is an ultimate question. And therefore are perhaps

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<sup>350</sup> B. Lonergan, cited in T. J. Tekippe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*, xi.

<sup>351</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Transcendental Arguments', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 9, (London: Routledge, 1998), 452.

<sup>352</sup> Lonergan, for example, roots his argument for the existent of God in these terms: 'that the existent is as such intelligible, that there are no matters of merely brute fact; and that this is possible only on the assumption of the existence of an unrestricted act of understanding, which understands all that could exist or be the case, and wills what actually does exist or is the case (See H. A. Meynell, 1991, 136).

distant from the common sense experience that what is most true and important about life is 'confrontational' and experiential, irrespective of the conceptual analysis that can retrospectively determine what makes experience 'x' possible.

Rahner argued that taking hold of individual instantiations of being meant *already having been taken hold of by ultimate Being* as a necessary condition for any and all activities, such objects of sensation as described in the Introduction necessitate an already existing a priori openness to the universal.<sup>353</sup> He presents an argument in which experience of Transcendence perhaps has content but not in any explicit or experiential way, nothing certain is apprehended.<sup>354</sup> Hence the central dynamics of Rahner posit *kinetics* as the hermeneutical key to his thought.<sup>355</sup> He means to say that there is always an apprehensive grasping,<sup>356</sup> and an anticipatory drive, peculiar to human knowing and living, that suggest the person is claimed from beyond by this transcendent ground or Being. Here therefore, in the exigencies of subjectivity, metaphysics is never 'news from nowhere',<sup>357</sup> but rather suggests a positive relationship to God albeit abstractly engaged through anthropological analysis. Hence for a person to have accepted their life is already to have accepted a mystery of this 'infinite emptiness which is man'.<sup>358</sup>

For Jaspers, however, there can be no positive ontological relation of the individual in their worldliness to this ever present ground. In an appealing metaphor that stands in high contrast to Rahner, Jaspers speaks of the subject reflecting the light of the 'infinite One' (i.e. Being, Transcendence, God) as drops of water reflect the sun.<sup>359</sup> But, *never* for Jaspers can this relation be ontological as though the one was mysteriously *facing* the other, however obscurely and dimly the relation is implied.<sup>360</sup> For Jaspers nothing can ever equate with Transcendence, however discreetly or analogously. He was so fanatical

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<sup>353</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Rahner, Karl,' *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, (London: Routledge, 1998), 35. Even more crisply, a 'finite system such as man cannot know itself as finite if it were nothing more than a finite system' (See K-H. Weger, 1980, 59).

<sup>354</sup> W. F. Ryan & B. J. Tyrrell, *A Second Collection*, 173.

<sup>355</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*, 270.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>358</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations, Vol. V: Later Writings*, (London: DLT, 1966), 7.

<sup>359</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, (London: Collins, 1967), 137. My emphasis.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

with upholding the dissimilarity between the person and Transcendence, that any attempt even to 'say' Transcendence was conceived as debased.<sup>361</sup> Throughout Jaspers' philosophy there is therefore an indestructible *nulla proportio* between the person and the eternal God.<sup>362</sup> It is clear that for both Jaspers and Rahner, Transcendence was the key to human emancipation, to adequately conceiving 'what is there' and what it all means. But Jaspers urges the person only to answer these questions through an immersion that contemplatively intuits the possible depths of life amid the ever unstable and ever ambiguous ciphers.<sup>363</sup> As Jaspers argues, existential elucidation is not ontology!<sup>364</sup> It is a perfectly lucid juxtaposition:

Existential elucidation does make use of objectivities and subjectivities, but it provides no orientation about their being. In it, objectivities and subjectivities are not intended to establish facts; they are monitored, so to speak, as data from world orientation...If the elucidation of Existenz were to lead us to ontological statements about it and thus to a *new objectivity* of the subjective realm, such congealment would make our evocative thinking cognitively meaningless and a tool for abuse.<sup>365</sup>

All that can be positively stated is that there is an existential self, ever restless, ever the possible but never thematic experience of Transcendence, with which the person can never even remotely remain in accord.<sup>366</sup> The darkness of interrogative knowing and grasping that Rahner advocates<sup>367</sup> is displaced by a light filled struggle as the existential self asks of existence 'what is there' and waits and watches for 'live' signals of actual Transcendence.

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<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>362</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 95.

<sup>363</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 140.

<sup>364</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 372.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 375. So too as Olson notes of Lonergan, also for whom 'true objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity' (See A. M. Olson, 1979, 86). For Jaspers Transcendence simply cannot be reached in this or any other 'critical' way, 'Transcendent being is inconceivable and undefinable; it is nothing' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 39).

<sup>366</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 112.

<sup>367</sup> S. J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*, 270.

Lonergan, in contrast to Rahner's a priori preoccupations, offers an exceptionally intricate series of metaphysical observations paradoxically stemming from an *a posteriori* conception of knowledge. Reiteratively, Lonergan invited his readers to 'attend to the mental acts in which they engage when they come to know anything...In getting to grips with what it is to come to know, we also gain a vital clue as to the overall nature of the world which is to be known'.<sup>368</sup> The existential experience so valued by Jaspers is played down in favour of a more reflective account of the nature of knowing that is alleged to demonstrate the presence of Transcendence to the cognitional act. Lonergan recognised that extroversion 'underpins the confrontational element of consciousness itself'<sup>369</sup> but experience is merely fuel for cognition,<sup>370</sup> not an end in itself. The key philosophical dynamics, like Rahner's, are once again in lucid juxtaposition to Jaspers'. The point, then:

...is appropriation; the point is to discover, to identify, to become familiar with the activities of one's own intelligence; the point is to become able to discriminate with ease and from personal conviction between one's purely intellectual activities and the manifold other, 'existential' concerns that invade and mix and blend with the operations of intellect to render it ambivalent and its pronouncements ambiguous.<sup>371</sup>

Thus although Lonergan does talk about experience per se, he 'also has his own technical sense, in which experience is an element in the compound of experience, understanding and judgement, three constituents which together result in knowledge'.<sup>372</sup> Metaphysics is therefore reached not 'phenomenally', but as the arduous conclusion of self-referential

<sup>368</sup> E. Craig, ed., Entry for 'Lonergan, Bernard, Joseph Francis,' *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, (London: Routledge, 1998), 822.

<sup>369</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 108-109. It must also be noted that a mind of Lonergan's calibre was also sensitive to the phenomenal aspects of life, even if they were not his priority: 'experience can occur for the sake of experiencing...it can slip beyond the confines of serious-minded biological purpose, and this very liberation is a spontaneous, self-justifying joy' (See F. E. Crowe & R. M. Doran, 1992, 208).

<sup>370</sup> H. A. Meynell, *An Introduction to The Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, Second Edition, (London: MacMillan, 1991), 6.

<sup>371</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, xix.

<sup>372</sup> F. E. Crowe, *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes*, Edited by M. Vertin, (London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 112. Experience 'simply provides the material for inquiry that will lead to understanding' (See J. Fitzpatrick, 2005, 70).

knowledge.<sup>373</sup> In these terms the appeal to the raw phenomenal richness offered in the Introduction as a theoretical precursor to elucidating Existenz and Jaspers' cipher theory of Transcendence, is for Lonergan 'merely' a starting point. The whole dynamic of *Insight* traces this moving viewpoint from the particular to the universal,<sup>374</sup> which, like Rahner, collides with Jaspers' philosophical thought. To Jaspers the idea that a fully disciplined inquiry into knowing, measured in exact formulations, aimed at realising universal definitions, is an impossible quest if *genuine* Transcendence is to be conceived.<sup>375</sup> There can be no expected or anticipated intelligibility where Transcendence is concerned.

For example, whereas as for Lonergan human *enrichment* consisted in seeking cogency and viewpoints built within and against uncoordinated scraps of data,<sup>376</sup> for Jaspers the person is unequivocally "mired" in these 'scraps', in Dasein (p. 41f), mired in the wearying facticity from which they must take flight.<sup>377</sup> Hence enrichment for Jaspers is about giving up on any sense of cogently approaching Transcendence from the material of cerebration, and letting Existenz, the existential self, encounter the endlessly variable ciphers.<sup>378</sup> Whatever heuristic character there is to human understanding,<sup>379</sup> it does not, and cannot ever proceed methodologically to a transcendent goal. In claiming to have established a critical and verifiable metaphysics Lonergan,<sup>380</sup> if successful, undoubtedly and safely traverses what may become for the existentialist a 'subjectivist bog'.<sup>381</sup> But Jaspers, it will shortly be established, seeks to dismiss the very notion of verifiable Transcendence, and nevertheless takes this risk by arguing for the suspension of critical faculties in relation to what he regards is an 'ultimate situation'. As Jaspers remarked in

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<sup>373</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, xxvii.

<sup>374</sup> D. Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan*, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 104.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-106.

<sup>376</sup> H. A. Meynell, *An Introduction to The Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, 3.

<sup>377</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 151. The reader might to note that in *Insight* Lonergan suggests that an appeal to the categories of Dasein-Existenz discussed above, merely describes 'the existence of man' and therefore provides no definite answers about Transcendence (See B. Lonergan, 1957, 669). Of course for Jaspers, as is being advanced, there are no definitive answers where Transcendence is concerned!

<sup>378</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 137.

<sup>379</sup> D. Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan*, 112.

<sup>380</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, xi.

<sup>381</sup> I. Coelho, *Hermeneutics & Method: The 'Universal Viewpoint' in Bernard Lonergan*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 215.



*Way to Wisdom*, 'philosophy, despite its claim to universality, is not actually universal in any shape or form'.<sup>382</sup>

It is clear that for Lonergan Transcendence was 'the elementary matter of raising further questions',<sup>383</sup> and seeking a point at which all answers cease.<sup>384</sup> But Jaspers urged the person to forego the same stipulations of cogency and listen in an altogether different way to the reality of the world, in other words, to stop seeking cogent answers! Hence knowing Transcendence and Being cannot involve a series of intelligent grasps and affirmations,<sup>385</sup> in view of the fact that Being is the 'objective of the detached and disinterested desire to inquire intelligibly and to reflect critically'.<sup>386</sup> For Jaspers Transcendence simply cannot be accommodated to cognition.<sup>387</sup>

In the cipher, *questioning has an end*, as it has in the unconditionality of existential action. There is a kind of questioning ad infinitum which amounts to empty intellectuality because it lacks an existential impulse. Questioning has its true place for us, and it is boundless in world orientation, but before the cipher it fades.<sup>388</sup>

Both these contrasting epistemological approaches to Transcendence, of Rahner and Lonergan, appear to reflect on 'what is happening' when something (say an object like a tree or a star) is known, not 'what is there' and 'how does the experience come across', so to speak, 'is there a further depth and significance?' The seminal contrast between epistemological and existential approaches to Transcendence is that for Jaspers the exigencies of deep selfhood fathoming possible Transcendence are *opposed* to ontological and epistemological commitments of any kind.<sup>389</sup> The person is simply deluded if they begin to try and absolutise a supposed source of otherness.<sup>390</sup> If there is a transcendent depth it can only be realised through a diaphanous existential predicament

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<sup>382</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 162.

<sup>383</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 635.

<sup>384</sup> H. A. Meynell, *An Introduction to The Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, 132.

<sup>385</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight*, 641.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 652.

<sup>387</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 200.

<sup>388</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 151. Transcendence, as Jaspers constantly suggests in his literary corpus cannot be proved (See K. Jaspers, 1956, 131).

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 141. For example, 'my relation to transcendence can never be a planned arrangement' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 61).

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

which can find its way to a unitised experience of existence, of Being and Transcendence and God, only through fraught existential reality.<sup>391</sup> Hence Jaspers' admonition that:

In all lucidity we can choose a false road. Even the certainty of decision, in so far as it is manifested in the world, must retain a certain element of suspension. For the most devastating threat to truth in the world is the overweening claim to the absolutely true.<sup>392</sup>

In the present analysis, the choice for attempting to comprehend this alleged 'Transcendence' appears to be twofold. Between epistemological approaches which argue that Transcendence is almost a *regulatory ideal* that implicitly and endlessly conditions the human situation, but invariably at a distance, accessible only in couched and dense language and theorem. And between existentialist standards, where for Jaspers experiential depths can become a genuine facet of subjectivity when Existenz, the existential self, gravitates towards Transcendence<sup>393</sup> and becomes flooded with the ciphers which announce its presence.<sup>394</sup> It is a *presence* that can be fully known in no other way. And so Jaspers' contrasting epistemological strategy turns out, it will shortly be seen, to be no intellectual strategy at all! It is all a matter of *Ergriffenheit*- of emotion and feeling and intuiting, a matter of 'allowing oneself to be seized by the ciphers and by the Transcendence they mediate'.<sup>395</sup> It is a claim, that philosophy does not need the tangential and oblique theorising of these epistemological methods, that it can become experientially aware of Transcendence itself!<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>392</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 70. The reader might fruitfully note that for Jaspers, seeking durable terms in relation to depth phenomena is to attempt what might be called 'forbidden solidifications' (See J. Thyssen, 'The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 305).

<sup>393</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 73.

<sup>394</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 72.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 180. Alternatively, 'What shows it to me is not a metaphysical hypothesis in which I infer and calculate what being might be; it is the tangibility of the cipher' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 115). As Grabau suggests, the Encompassing is actually a *felt* quality (See R. F. Grabau, Preface to K. Jaspers, 1971, xvi).

<sup>396</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 163. As a final note of clarification on leaving the present Chapter, Jaspers typically comments that no 'definitive, pictorially or speculatively rounded knowledge of transcendent being can be attained in existential philosophy' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 191).

## A CIPHER THEORY OF TRANSCEDENCE

The reader might find an ongoing summary helpful. It follows from the analysis presented in the Introduction: World Orientation (i): Object Knowledge, that human knowing is initially predicated on the objective estimate of a physical environment.<sup>397</sup> But it follows from the argument in World Orientation (ii): Existential Depth, that these estimates of 'what is there' do not exhaust knowledge because of the density and variety of human experience. In this sense, the thesis was set up as an argument for Transcendence stemming from *experience*, which seems always to be hinting at something 'more' to life. The force of Chapter One was to present Jaspers' contention that the failure of sciences, built upon well-rounded object-knowledge provide a situation from which philosophy can begin to explore the deeper questions, such as 'is there Transcendence?' And if there is, 'can I experience it?' The existential self or Existenz will thus not confuse object-being with Being, or Transcendence as such, and so vexes the epistemological cogency of exacting heuristic and descriptive methods in science as it somehow comprehends this antecedent completeness that Jaspers termed the Encompassing.<sup>398</sup>

The Encompassing is the 'Being which holds everything together, lies at the base of everything, as the Being from which everything issues'.<sup>399</sup> And Jaspers' founding philosophical insight was therefore that reality is a *totality*, and that this whole both underlies the objective appearance of 'things' and 'experiences' and is *more than* the rundown of things and experiences in a real world.<sup>400</sup> Indeed the notion of an Encompassing and transcendent depth beyond the common sense or scientific conception

<sup>397</sup> As the robust view of realism advocated, knowledge begins in the senses.

<sup>398</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 122.

<sup>399</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 12. As Samay perceptively comments, the 'idea of the Encompassing is rather, so to speak, a subverting idea which removes from us all the natural objectivity of our usual thought' (p. 73).

<sup>400</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 1. Perhaps, and for the avoidance of doubt, the reader might note a final confirmation of Jaspers' argumentation in this regard: 'Objective for our consciousness is extant being. This is given in its own presence. The object is close to us because it exists either physically, tangibly, or as a necessary conception. As such an empirical or cogently valid object, it is alone and does not mean anything else' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 14).

of reality is understood to collapse if it becomes an object of exploration.<sup>401</sup> There is therefore always 'more' to existence than human life can adequately fathom. And the polemic has variously intimated that a qualitative experience of Transcendence is understood to be possible in Jaspers' thinking, because Transcendence is not exhausted by the exigencies of subjectivity and the self-transcending subject.<sup>402</sup>

The differing approaches of Rahner and Lonergan to this 'completeness', or transcendent basis to existence, were then presented and contrasted with Jaspers' approach, as it is slowly unfolding in the thesis argument. It was suggested that neither abstract a priori anthropological assertions nor the exigencies of cognitional theory provide preferable alternatives to conceiving an argument for Transcendence. Perhaps the key sentence to carry from the previous into the present Chapter in this regard are those words of Jaspers where he comments that it would be erroneous if an elucidation of the existential self 'were to lead us to ontological statements about it and thus to a *new objectivity* of the subjective realm' (p. 81). The *nulla proportio* between the person and Transcendence is not to be overcome by any objectifying tendencies, even an objectivity demonstrated as the natural epistemic implications of authentic subjectivity. Therefore an exposition of Jaspers' cipher theory of Transcendence, as promised in the Introduction, is believed to offer an improvement upon these epistemological approaches. A demonstration of Transcendence as part of the apparatus accounting for the very possibility of experience is henceforth *subordinated* to an analysis seeking to describe an experience of Transcendence.<sup>403</sup> As difficult as such an undertaking may be.

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<sup>401</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, 23.

<sup>402</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 167. There is always 'more' Transcendence, an excess or overplus which Jaspers claims can be *experienced*. Illustratively, Jaspers comments that 'Transcendence is not used up, it is not a private intrinsic being of mine' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 21). The reader might like to know that such an approach contrasts with, for example, the existentialism of M. Heidegger, cited above, for whom the *act* of transcendence and the *Being* of Transcendence are the same (See A. M. Olson, 1979, xx). As Olson makes clear, there is, for Jaspers, an overplus to Transcendence not accounted for *by* transcending acts, which, although historical in essence, is not '*the essence*' (See A. M. Olson, 1979, 107). Alternatively expressed, 'it would be wrong to limit Transcendence to this depth in the I' (See J. Thyssen, 'The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 303).

<sup>403</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, xxi.

But it immediately follows, the alert reader might have noted, that if transcendent Being is a possible 'experience' then it cannot, according to the limits objectifying thinking established in Chapter One, be forced into the structures of the subject-object dichotomy.<sup>404</sup> Plainly, then, it cannot be an ordinary instance of experience and knowledge. In which case, a severe epistemological problem is encountered.<sup>405</sup> For if Transcendence is perhaps a condition of knowing, as Rahner and Lonergan suggest, and does not, as Jaspers constantly admonishes, become phenomenal at all within the intentional split of subjects sundering reality into disparate objects,<sup>406</sup> then how can it be known? For Jaspers such a predicament does not void the question of Transcendence. Rather, it invites a very different epistemological strategy. Somehow human beings are able to answer the question 'what is there' with an experience which transcends the obviousness of the world.<sup>407</sup> Hence Jaspers holds that philosophy has a mystical dimension articulating the 'knowledge' of being in relation to Transcendence, not merely at the level of existing in relation to serviceable pragmatisms and physical reality.<sup>408</sup>

And as was suggested in the Introduction, only a cipher can manifest this transcendent depth encompassing existence and assure the person of its presence. There is as Jaspers said 'an element of helplessness in grasping at the support of reliable laws and authoritative commands. In contradistinction, there is a soaring energy in the individual responsibility of listening to the whole of reality'.<sup>409</sup> But this 'whole' that Jaspers is ever tormented by, ever trying to conceive, speaks and therefore is heard only in the intricate and momentary and fleeting language of ciphers. It is time to establish in detail what he means.

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<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>405</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 170. i.e. because 'being, once splintered by our inquiry, cannot be restored as *one* being...Being has now been dissolved, and its disjointness is the lasting result of immanent thinking...This is why, having left immanence as the diversity of being, we now attempt in transcending to ascertain true being as the one and only one. This being does not come under any category' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 33).

<sup>406</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 94.

<sup>407</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, xvii.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>409</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 73.

## 1. CIPHERS OF TRANSCENDENCE

Having qualified the approach to Transcendence made by Rahner and Lonergan, and suggested that Jaspers' thought is a preferable series of steps towards realising its presence and depth it will help the reader to observe the dynamics central to cipher theory in the context of the present thesis. A dynamic which utilises the *first* of the three levels of transcending in Jaspers' thought. Namely, the apparent transition from the world of objects initially appearing in answer to the question 'what is there', towards an experience of *Being itself* from which all object appearance 'issues', so to speak. In other words, from the particular something *universal*, i.e. the transcendent basis of existence, is realisable. In these senses the positive data collected by the scientific method, as was seen above, present the person with an intellectual predicament. They may either accept reality only as it appears within the subject-object dichotomy, and in Jaspers' pejorative terms become 'positivists' i.e. equate knowing in its entirety with empirical knowledge. Or, they may transcend the boundary of objects and let slip the predisposition that all that can be known about existence, about 'what is there' has clear and precise objective foundations.

This is the essential paradox of ciphers, *Transcendence appears within the immanent*. As Samay comments, we 'know Being only as it manifests itself in object-beings. It seems that, in order to grasp the Whole, consciousness should somehow overcome its own definiteness and envelop the scissions which itself creates'.<sup>410</sup> As further clarification, recall once again that the Encompassing, one might call it the 'enveloping', is not an investigable object.<sup>411</sup> As Jaspers comments in his *Reason and Existenz* lectures, 'To be sure, Transcendence has priority in being; but it is hidden'.<sup>412</sup> But instead of treating the notion of Transcendence as 'not a proper question' and lapsing back into mere object-knowledge, Jaspers encourages his readers to endure existentially at these boundary limits and 'await' Transcendence. As has been suggested above (p. 40f), the limits to the discernment codified by the natural sciences simply open up a space which only the

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<sup>410</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 14.

<sup>411</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 24.

<sup>412</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 107.

existential self can realise.<sup>413</sup> Jaspers calls this ever intending never successful impetus to realise more about life than general knowledge can state “Foundering”. It is a concept central to understanding the meaning of ciphers. Foundering, by definition ‘signifies the fruitlessness of all endeavours to reach, from a finite basis,...a satisfactory access to Being, i.e. to arrive at the absolute’.<sup>414</sup> It is another way of presenting the contention outlined in the Introduction that there is more to life that can be described by an objective presentation of reality. In other words, that cognition gives only the *appearance* of something<sup>415</sup> for Jaspers simply means that empiricism is only one mode of experience:

from Jaspers’ critique of science, it is evident that our grasp on being cannot be an instance of knowledge, since the latter is confined to the region of objects. We cannot *know* being as such, even though we may be able to use reason to apprehend it in some non-objective and non-knowing way.<sup>416</sup>

What is this ‘non-objective non-knowing way’? To pose the problem in its simplest terms, the referential character of knowing quickly reaches natural limits at various boundaries marked by cogent and accurate, ‘universal’ knowledge. Universal knowledge refers to all those epistemologically more certain elements that go to the making of a compelling scientific worldview. But in relation to the absolute ground Jaspers holds to be the deepest basis of existence, no such cognitive grasp is possible, although all such objects exist in this basic unifying ground which he terms the Encompassing. Hence Jaspers replaces the security of objective claims to a universally valid description of the world in its entirety with this notion of foundering.<sup>417</sup> A different hermeneutical posture is invited in contrast to the rational communicable description of realist leanings, and as a different epistemological strategy, it will yield different results, a different way of

<sup>413</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 35.

<sup>414</sup> Glossary, P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), xx.

<sup>415</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 299. Or, in Jaspers’ own words, factual cognition ‘lets me understand its limits. I can understand that cognition and its contents are not outright being’ (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 5).

<sup>416</sup> J. Collins, ‘Jaspers on Science and Philosophy’, 130. There are traces here, once again, of Jaspers’ Kantian heritage briefly discussed in Chapter One, i.e. the sense in which there is both that which is *visible* but also an *unknowable element* (See J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 298).

<sup>417</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 333.

knowing. Ciphers are the language of the inexpressible contact with Being. As Jaspers argues in volume three of *Philosophy*:

There is being for us if it has a voice in existence. A pure beyond is empty; it is as if it were not. Hence the possibility of experiencing being proper requires an *immanent transcendence*. Yet this immanence is patently paradoxical in character. Immanence (precisely as distinct from transcendent) is that which can be concurrently experienced by everyone in consciousness at large. In other words: the world is immanent....Immanent transcendence is an immanence that has instantly vanished again, and it is a transcendence that has come to exist as the language of a cipher. The cipher is what brings transcendence to mind without obliging transcendence to become an objective being.<sup>418</sup>

Terms in which the somewhat theoretical basis of Transcendence in ‘transcendental arguments’ is clearly displaced by an actual experiential realisation. How is it possible to make such a claim? It is possible because a process of ‘disobjectivication’, getting over the fetish that all of reality is objectively ‘over there’ or ‘over here’ so to speak, Jaspers claims, allows objects to ‘float’, in his parlance to become *evanescent*.<sup>419</sup> Synonyms for evanescent include words like fleeting, passing, temporary, short lived, transient and ephemeral. As O’Connor expresses clearly the ‘self must hover simultaneously with the hovering of the objectivity of the object. It is the simultaneity of the hovering that permits the Being that we are to be immediately present to the Being in and through which we are. This is the cipher event’.<sup>420</sup> Jaspers is trying to say that the human contact with everyday objective reality is attended by an experience of wholeness and depth in which all of life participates. As objects are allowed to become evanescent Being is alleged to somehow ‘shine’ through them:

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<sup>418</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 119-120. Or elsewhere, Jaspers comments that ‘The Encompassing exists only so far as it appears in the subject-object dichotomy’ (See K. Jaspers, 1969, 29).

<sup>419</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 175.

<sup>420</sup> B. F. O’Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 22.



“Becoming transparent” is a well-known concept of Jaspers. It implies the view that empirical being can let Transcendence “shine through,” as a screen transmits rays, so that individual entities turn into code entities, ciphers for Being.<sup>421</sup>

Here Jaspers claims is an utterly compelling experience which no science can approach. Here is an ‘*increasing lucidity of a sense of being*’ totally different from all determinate knowledge’.<sup>422</sup> Ciphers communicate this deeper sense that all of existence is enveloped, encompassed by Transcendence which becomes experientially evident at rare moments. The ciphers will speak! As Thyssen goes on to suggest:

The unity of Transcendence becomes eloquent in true, though occasionally contradictory, aspects which are experienced ‘*existentially*’ and which are expressed symbolically in the quasi-objective language of ciphers.<sup>423</sup>

Hence even though some particular act of knowledge, the clear sense of ‘what is there’, *is* highly particular it does not mean that Being cannot be experientially manifest.<sup>424</sup> Properly attended to, Jaspers claims, the experience of objects can become transparent to this more fundamental level of reality. With this insight the crucial relevance of cipher theory to the science and religion debate presents itself. It does so in Jaspers’ notion that Transcendence can paradoxically be known by actually *preserving* the subject-object dichotomy.<sup>425</sup> As a consequence, the finest and most exacting natural science can, in the picture of the theory, experience a depth that natural science in the terms of its own methodology cannot possibly describe, a theoretical contention amply testified to in the graduation of scientific into aesthetic and often theistic discourse, to be discussed in the next Chapter. Quite simply:

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<sup>421</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’, 306.

<sup>422</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, 19.

<sup>423</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 311.

<sup>424</sup> J. Collins, ‘Jaspers on Science and Philosophy’, 139.

<sup>425</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 103.

If empirical consciousness and its world are, so to speak, the surface of the one Transcendence, then it is truly omnipresent. Jaspers holds accordingly that this presence of Transcendence in different entities can be experienced as their background.<sup>426</sup>

It means to say that cognition is initially a factor in ciphers<sup>427</sup> but beyond communicable ratiocination, one might say serially and syllogistically appropriating object-existence and quietly winning steps from endlessness there is something more that is 'known' where strict thinking fails. Here in the presence of object-cognition is a further depth, an alternate and ephemeral language describing the world of Transcendence.<sup>428</sup> It is a form of communication inaccessible to *generally valid ratiocination* and for this reason lies experientially beyond straightforward epistemic access.<sup>429</sup> In other words, Jaspers advocates a shift in the noetic stance of subjectivity that renders the material realities of existence in new depths as possible ciphers of Being.<sup>430</sup> As Jaspers says, the 'purpose and therefore the meaning of a philosophical idea is not the cognition of an object, but rather an alteration of our consciousness of Being and of our inner attitude toward things'.<sup>431</sup> There is something more to be known and experienced than can be easily stated. Jaspers expresses this clearly in *Philosophy is for Everyman*, where he suggests that the:

significations which cannot be annulled by equating them with the object signified we call ciphers. They signify, but they do not signify a specific thing. The content is only in the cipher and does not exist outside it.<sup>432</sup>

What is it that does not exist outside the cipher? The answer is 'Being', this sense of totality and completeness and depth that Jaspers claims accompanies objective appearances providing such experiences are not taken to have exhausted reality. Recall, with a fresh citation the earlier discussion (p. 41) that for Jaspers ontology is ever about

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<sup>426</sup> J. Thyssen, 'The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 307. Typically, *Sacramentum Mundi* expresses this well: 'The hidden ground of Transcendence lies there therefore in this "positiveness" of being, which pervades most profoundly all immanence and is nonetheless not simply absorbed there' (See K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for 'Transcendence', 1970, 276).

<sup>427</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 168.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>429</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 56.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>431</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 75.

<sup>432</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 93.

the 'beingness of beings, but not the Being of beings'.<sup>433</sup> Transcendent Being is, as Jaspers put it, the "presentness" within the cipher that can be experienced in no other way.<sup>434</sup> And so in these senses ciphers function as prisms<sup>435</sup> which can be looked through, and through which these alleged depth dimensions of Being are revealed. Any particular object under scrutiny may be transiently realised in its constitutive relation to the binding depths of the Encompassing. This most sublime reality can be known at such privileged moments when epistemological fixity and precision is forgone and the person opens themselves to possible Being. These comments and the earlier argument that science serves merely to 'stage' a situation for philosophy can be seen in Jaspers 1967 text that extensively develops his cipher theory, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*:

The great step in which man transforms himself occurs when the supposed corporeality of Transcendence is given up as deceptive and the ambiguous cipher language is heard instead - when the contents that have been conceived and visualised are stripped of objective reality. Instead of tangibles there remain ciphers open to infinitely varied interpretation.<sup>436</sup>

To continue the metaphor, it is essential to *listen* carefully and attend the unique particulars of experiential existence encountered in properly asking 'what is there' because ciphers, according to Jaspers, are the 'generally illegible, existentiality deciphered handwriting of something else'.<sup>437</sup> The notion of an 'infinitely varied interpretation' that existentially deciphers illegibility speaks well, if perhaps obtusely, of Jaspers epistemological commitments and motivations. Indeed it has been noted that for Jaspers truth is not a static concept and that he therefore holds a pluriform view of truth.<sup>438</sup> And so ciphers appear as the cryptic articles of the many magnificent drafts of Being in which the non-objective ground to all existence, the transcendent Encompassing, is brought to life at 'certain privileged moments of repose when we are

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<sup>433</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 57.

<sup>434</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 121.

<sup>435</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 174.

<sup>436</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 92.

<sup>437</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 73.

<sup>438</sup> A. C. Thiselton, *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, (Oxford: One World, 2002), 151.

freed from our customary preoccupation with the pragmatic and exploitable aspects of reality and become attuned to the overwhelming presence of Transcendence permeating all things'.<sup>439</sup> But it is impossible to fix and order and bring any sort of critical cogency to these experiences, which would destroy the very nature of ciphers. In short, one does not think beyond ciphers but 'exists in their glow',<sup>440</sup> in a kind existential apprehension which necessarily eludes any attempts at conceptual thought. It is simply what happens when the depth to existence is realised.

It means to say that at special if fleeting moments something is realised in knowing that exceeds adequate description. Being is known to have suddenly revealed itself in very particular circumstances as the person wrestles with the nature of objects. And hence continuing the thesis argument, and its insistence upon developing attentiveness to the 'unique particulars' that manifest in experience, a cipher is any event when Being emerges momentarily to the existential self. This is not strictly speaking a sense experience, but something which attends sensory experience at a deeper level. Indeed Jaspers was obviously disinclined to settle questions about the nature of reality purely at the natural, organic and sensory level.<sup>441</sup> There was, he thought, more to the world.

Thus it is that in ciphers, the interest in consciousness goes beyond the epistemological conditioning of objectivities, and finds itself in the presence of Transcendence.<sup>442</sup> Ciphers are the language of this otherwise inexpressible Transcendence.<sup>443</sup> Ciphers bring Transcendence into *presence*.<sup>444</sup> And so it is through the unique particulars of life that

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<sup>439</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 179.

<sup>440</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 130.

<sup>441</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 70.

<sup>442</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 68.

<sup>443</sup> The reader might find it helpful to consider again the relevance of *phenomenology* to cipher theory, the discipline which attends strictly to what appears to be the case for conscious experience, and which was for Jaspers a 'descriptive tool' (See A. M. Olson, 1979, 125-126). The German philosopher and phenomenologist E. Husserl offers a helpful description appealingly relevant to the overall intention of cipher theory with these words in which he advises, 'in full consciousness, to discard all scepticism together with all 'natural philosophy' and 'theory of knowledge', and find the data of knowledge where they actually face you, whatever difficulties epistemological reflection may subsequently raise concerning the possibility of such data being there' (See A. E. McGrath, 2002, 271). Ciphers arguably function in a similar fashion, assuring the person of Transcendence irrespective of their ability to account for its presence with epistemological cogency.

<sup>444</sup> J. Thyssen, 'The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 308.

humans are able to think through the significations of Being, in which, for Jaspers 'something is heard that comes to meet man'.<sup>445</sup> That 'something' is the presence of Transcendence, and once again, ciphers 'speak' the manner of this 'jolt',<sup>446</sup> felt in consciousness upon grasping facets and depths of existence. Hence for Jaspers, 'the world and its objects are so many signs and ciphers',<sup>447</sup> in which the ineffable enters language, and in so doing becomes perceptible. Ciphers open these new areas of Being<sup>448</sup> left permanently unaddressed by the methods and aspirations of science, and if responded to properly create a 'reflection spreading out in all directions'.<sup>449</sup>

'Such experiences', argues Jaspers, we may speak 'out of' but not 'of'.<sup>450</sup> The extraordinary is simply a matter of attending to the givenness of the ordinary world in a new way. Indeed, to clarify the polemic further still, the reader might find helpful the thought of Anthony O'Hear where he comments that 'it is in experiencing worldly things *sub specie aeternitatis*, in and of themselves, that we gain the sense of an eternal world behind the aesthetic object'.<sup>451</sup> And hence the claim that the data about the world requires a 'broader canvas' than the sciences can either supply or collaborate on.<sup>452</sup> Such intuitions and experiences are difficult to describe but yield a sense of certainty: there is more to the question 'what is there?' than a tally of objects.<sup>453</sup>

## 2. EXISTENTIAL SUBJECTIVITY

It was suggested in the Introduction that Jaspers' philosophy could make a significant contribution to the science and religion debate, and an epistemologically more satisfying approach to its thinking than Peacocke's inference based strategy, to be considered in the

<sup>445</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 93.

<sup>446</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 163.

<sup>447</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', 135.

<sup>448</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 92.

<sup>449</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 79.

<sup>450</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 106. The reader might like to recall the earlier distinction conjectured to exist between experience and discourse, i.e. (fn 157) or (fn 162).

<sup>451</sup> A. O'Hear, *Beyond Evolution: Human Nature and the Limits of Evolutionary Explanation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 30.

<sup>452</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 243.

<sup>453</sup> G. Knauss, 'The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy', 147.

next and final Chapter. It was proposed to do so against a general backdrop in which ‘all knowledge, implicitly or explicitly, is tied to the ideals of *impartiality* and *objectivity*’ and as a consequence ‘claims to truth and genuine experience of the world admit validation from a *universal viewpoint* that is demonstrably independent of the knower and so widely, even universally, accepted’ (p. 19). Perhaps it will help the reader to foreground this tendency to equate truth with objectivity, the latter point of which was articulated by Peacocke, by considering in more detail the general tenor of his polemic. Peacocke quite aggressively sets out the contemporary challenge of science to religious beliefs (i.e. the notion of Transcendence considered from the standpoint of one or more faith commitments (fn 272)) in the first two chapters of *Paths from Science Towards God*. The following are illustrative examples. There has, he argues, been a collapse in the credibility of all religious beliefs, induced by the successful methodology and worldview of science.<sup>454</sup> It follows that:

What characterises science is a method that is manifestly capable of producing reliable public knowledge about the natural world, sufficient for prediction and control and for producing reliable public knowledge about the natural world. The mere existence of such a method and of such a corpus of reliable knowledge resulting from it is a challenge to traditional religious attitudes.<sup>455</sup>

It is clear from Peacocke’s intellectual attitude that experience as a fundamental category is subordinate to the standards of a cogently explicable rationality. It is a laudable aim. But while he freely suggests that he does not want to ‘discount the subtlety and complexity of many aspects of the knowing process in relation to the variety of what human beings can experience’,<sup>456</sup> the pervasive identity of the polemic suggests otherwise. Elsewhere, for example, it is claimed that theology has been weighed on the scales and found wanting. And therefore “revised theology” is to distinguish between theology as the ‘intellectual content of religious belief’ and religion ‘which is about

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<sup>454</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 12. As he goes on to propose, ‘The credibility of all religions is at stake under the impact of: new understandings of the natural world, of the place of humanity in it and of the very nature of personhood; and – even more corrosively – the loss of respect for the intellectual integrity of religious thinking in general and of Christian theology in particular’ (p. 15).

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

individual and communal experiences'.<sup>457</sup> Hence, against the axiomatic argument of the thesis that (fn 97) there is an 'existential uniqueness of individual particulars which no science can directly apprehend' stands Peacocke's counterpoint. He clearly mistrusts 'experience' as an evidential source, '“Relativism rules” is all the cry', he comments, such that theologians are 'self-exonerated from justifying their beliefs in the arena of public discourse'.<sup>458</sup>

Further to that, Peacocke's citation of P. Clayton and S. Knapp is illustrative in suggesting that the need for intersubjective assessment is central to making religious belief accessible to adequate epistemic scrutiny.<sup>459</sup> The clear intention being the attempt to formulate 'public truth about the relation of nature, humanity and God',<sup>460</sup> and to distance those claims which fail to meet these criteria. In short, theology, in seeking to speak about the depth of existence, about the *nature* and *meaning* of 'what is there', is to be 'subjected to a critical winnowing process by application of the criteria of reasonableness'.<sup>461</sup> Peacocke unambiguously intends to submit the human experience of the depth and mystery of existence to the esteemed standards of rationality and description that characterise the Enlightenment project. And in so doing commits two errors which are amply juxtaposed in the literature of Jaspers. The first error occurs in Peacocke's implicit use of reason, as it is given in these examples, as the defining element in the future of religious discourse. The second is the application of reason to the apparent phenomenon of transcendent depth presenting in experience.

At the outset, it can be noted that there is arguably no agreed or uniquely correct, and in those terms, 'universal', sense of exactly what "reason" is.<sup>462</sup> In the terms of the present study an exhaustive discussion of the nature and role of reason is not possible, it is a thesis itself. Nevertheless, a useful point of contrast between Peacocke and Jaspers can be drawn. Reason, by definition, refers to the 'statement of some fact (real or alleged)

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<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>461</sup> A. Peacocke, *Theology for A Scientific Age*, 20.

<sup>462</sup> G. J. Warnock, cited in D. Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1986), 46.

employed as an argument to justify or condemn some act, prove or disprove some assertion, idea, or belief'.<sup>463</sup> The central issue concerns the application of a 'fact' employed in justification of a conviction that Transcendence is real. Indeed the sensitive reader might already note that a coupling of an obtuse notion like the Encompassing with epistemic commitments seeking proof, fact and justification commits a category error. So as to say, it asks inappropriate questions of phenomena that simply cannot be addressed in such terms. Jaspers has been seen to continually point this out to his readers. It is to suggest a given entity, such as 'God' or Transcendence possesses properties it could not possibly have. It is an error to set a truth condition in relation to an area of possible existence that can never provide the means for meeting the condition. To ask for Transcendence in 'generally valid terms is impossible'.<sup>464</sup>

To suggest the contrary, that *all* knowledge is about proof and justification is arguably to adopt a form of 'hard rationalism'. What is hard rationalism? 'Hard rationalism,' is the admittance into dialogue about existence, about 'what is there', of only those elements of reality of an allowed, invariably restrictive, evidential weight. Science has 'shown' reality to the world with predictive control and accuracy, ipso facto, theology in not demonstrating the same cogency in relation to God is found wanting, to state the argument simplistically. In its stronger and more committed forms, equating reality with objective reliability can even be regarded as a "duty" which guards human thinking from the 'pestilence',<sup>465</sup> of unsupported beliefs. In such a view 'it is wrong always, and everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence'.<sup>466</sup> Inevitably, hard rationalism sets the standard of rationality<sup>467</sup> and tends to implicitly

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<sup>463</sup> *SOED*, 1757.

<sup>464</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 9.

<sup>465</sup> W. Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief', in M. Peterson *et al.*, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 69.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. The reader might find it helpful to refer to the very public arguments between the Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, Richard Dawkins, and dissenting interlocutors such as Professor Keith Ward and Revd. Professor Alistair McGrath, both variously cited in the thesis. Their texts such as Dawkins' *The God Delusion* and McGrath's reply *The Dawkins Delusion?: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* struggle for the meaning of rationality and what may reasonably be said about the nature of existence and are 'classical' contemporary examples of the radical juxtaposition of thought in this regard.

<sup>467</sup> W. J. Abraham, 'Soft Rationalism', in M. Peterson *et al.*, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 86.



devalue and downplay all claims to truth that do not meet exacting standards of knowledge.

In which case a pertinent question can be restated: which of the areas of human experience discussed in the Introduction, can be approvingly stamped 'hard rationalist'? In the earlier discussion all kind of areas which are central to human life were conjectured, and which fail these criteria, (fn 134) areas like art and music, history and economics, psychology, sociology, philosophy and theology. None are exact and quantitative, let alone is the manner in which humans relate to and think and feel these disciplines through. The example of human love (fn 238) was advanced as the axiomatic example in which description and evidence cannot possibly equate with experience. And hence Jaspers appealingly argues that:

The nature of thought and knowledge is commonly taken in too narrow a sense, that of an understanding which exhausts itself in mechanical thinking, distinguishing, defining, and ordering. To experience such narrow, formalized, and partial thought is to furnish from thinking the basis for confusion out of which the impulse arises to reject thought as destructive to life. But even if I take thought in the wider sense of any objective or objectified dialectical thought, intellectually I experience this: what I know, insofar as it is known, actually becomes relativized for me since it changes into a possibility, into something questionable. Thus it seems that I can not both unconditionally be and, at the same time, know it.<sup>468</sup>

If these broad domains of human life are to be tolerated as genuinely informative about the nature of existence, then a contrary position, central to understanding the existentialist approach to reality, is what W. J. Abraham terms 'soft rationalism'.<sup>469</sup> A requirement of soft rationalism is that beliefs and commitments are assessed as a 'rounded whole'. It presents an epistemic strategy closely in accord with Jaspers' understanding of reason and its role in fathoming the nature of life. The first thing to realise, an insight necessary to accepting non-exacting disciplines in the humanities, not to mention the subtleties of

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<sup>468</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 123.

<sup>469</sup> W. J. Abraham, 'Soft Rationalism', 84.

personal experience, and as Jaspers suggested in the previous citation, is that there is ‘no formal calculus into which all the evidence can be fitted and assessed’.<sup>470</sup> Instead recognition must be given to the ‘unique particulars’ valued in the Introduction, and what Abraham terms a ‘network of phenomena’.<sup>471</sup>

The role of reason is therefore to *relate* and *clarify* the relations which exist in the many diverse, pluriform levels of existence that confront the individual. Consequently reason functions not to abstract and codify specific elements of existence that can then be termed ‘scientific’ in conforming to the criteria of hard rationalism, but to help clarify all kind of patterns in which informal logic is naturally deployed in everyday life.<sup>472</sup> For example, ‘where the premises or evidences do not conclusively demonstrate a conclusion’,<sup>473</sup> intuition can perhaps provide a deeper if less verifiable experience. And as will shortly be seen, intuition is arguably evident throughout science. Reason can perhaps be understood as an ‘intuitive, synoptic, integrative faculty of grasping things as a whole and intuiting their inner connection and coherence’.<sup>474</sup>

Genuine rationality, is, therefore, distinctly open-minded<sup>475</sup> (as opposed to determining only those ‘things’ to be real which are *solid*, *repetitive*, and so on), and is open to the phenomenality of Being in all its apparent guises. As Jaspers argued, reason is properly understood in these terms not as a means of excluding, sifting and sorting (and, for example, distinguishing between theology as intellectual content and religion as ‘experience’) but as a *dynamic* which ‘achieves reality’<sup>476</sup> across the various modalities of Being. Within this encompassing reality, upon which the subject-object dichotomy is predicated, reason serves as an ‘encompassing vinculum’ for the ‘sundered’, (invariably sundered by the virtually inalienable tendency to explain reality in models of “thinghood”

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<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 90. Abraham is speaking specifically of religious experience but the principle may reasonably be widened to include the aesthetic, and depth phenomenon such as ciphers as they ‘speak’ of the enveloping ground from which they arise.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>473</sup> D. Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion*, 48-49.

<sup>474</sup> K. Ward, *The Case for Religion*, 168.

<sup>475</sup> S. Toulmin, cited in D. Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion*, 46.

<sup>476</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 73.

and, in a related sense in “pairs of things”, i.e. heaven-hell, earth-sky, light-dark, good-bad, mind-body and so forth), and thus will not allow Being to be diminished.<sup>477</sup> It means that the role of reason is not to abstract and explain, but to *relate*. To relate to one another the diverse levels of experience and produce satisfying often synthetic insights into the nature of existence.<sup>478</sup> Reason for Jaspers is the ‘bond’ that binds the divergent aspects of the Encompassing dissipated by the knowing process.<sup>479</sup>

In these terms reason is aimed not just at the lucid recognition of various objectivities, but provides a natural and synthetic impetus that seeks to apprehend not only the piecemeal, but various experiences and the relations of diverse levels of existence to one another, all the way through to an attempt to fathom transcendent Being itself.<sup>480</sup> It is, precisely, in this recognition that the different approach of Peacocke and Jaspers is clearly felt. Ciphers are arguably at odds with the epistemological standards espoused by the ‘Enlightenment project’:

Philosophy does not live by reason alone, yet it can take no step without it. Reason is not quite the substance out of which philosophy arises. For philosophy must ground itself in potential Existenz, which, for its part, can only unfold in rationality. I am that which is capable of reason but which is not made up of pure reason....I can speak of Reason, personify it, and pay my respects to it as the condition of all truth for me. But it is never a permanent thing; rather it constitutes a continuous task in time. It is not an end in itself, but rather a medium. It is that through which everything else preserves its nature, is clarified, corroborated, and recognized.<sup>481</sup>

It follows that for Jaspers the criteria of ‘reasonableness’ and validation from objective and universal viewpoints accessible to any competent observer, are simply inconsistent

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<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>478</sup> To confine knowledge is arguably a form of ‘restricted evidentialism’ (See K. Ward, 2004, 177). Jaspers would undoubtedly warm to J. Baillie’s view that reason is the ‘the ability to recognize truth when it is presented to us’ (See J. Baillie, cited in D. Pailin, 1986, 46).

<sup>479</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 107.

<sup>480</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 35.

<sup>481</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 131.

with realising the depth of possible Transcendence.<sup>482</sup> What, then, does Jaspers say about *subjective* nature of the relationship between the person and the transcendent depth of existence, noting again that such is ‘experience of God or Being-Itself, whether such experiences are natural or supernatural in their reference, theistic or atheistic in their meaning’.<sup>483</sup>

The main counterpoint to Peacocke’s preoccupation with ‘publicly’ shared rationality is that there can be no neutral, objective comprehension of ciphers, and therefore of Transcendence. Jaspers continually advises that the ‘interpreter does not come close to them until he lives them’.<sup>484</sup> As such they do not depend, as noted in the previous Chapter, on ratiocination but on existential participation. In which case a cipher is clearly not an instance of objective knowledge, and so arguably fails the criteria of reasonableness. Ciphers are, further to that, actually ‘unreasonable’ because no cognitive or epistemic access to them is possible. Indeed ‘the truer our grasp of transcendent being, the more decisively will its objective supports be destroyed’.<sup>485</sup> Therefore to seek universal validation and public knowledge about Transcendence is for Jaspers a markedly inappropriate intellectual posture.<sup>486</sup> For Jaspers it is not less than a category error. It seems to be the wrong kind of hermeneutic to pursue. As Law argues:

Nor is the interpretation of ciphers concerned with establishing their ‘valid’ meaning, for this would entail the objectification of the ciphers through the attempt to translate them into philosophically acceptable concepts. The attempt to establish the ‘validity’ of ciphers

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<sup>482</sup> Straight away the reader might find helpful a contrast to juxtapose the starkness of Peacocke’s insistence. Rowan Williams, for example, has in characteristically diffuse language referred to theology as the ‘muddled, struggling debate, so often stifled or abandoned, as to the character of human difference – the debate in which the Christian theologian obstinately battles to understand why it might be that the concrete plurality of human life, from conception to death, demands an unqualified, attentive and hopeful contemplation and a response of nurture and love’ (See R. Williams, ‘Afterword: Making Differences’, in L. Gardner *et al.*, 1999, 179). Alternatively, J. Milbank in a renowned work refers to theology not as ‘winnowed’ in this way, but rather as the ‘discourse of non-mastery’ (See J. Milbank, 1990, 6). In other words, the ascent to theological truth is not simply a matter of *force* of argument (See T. Merton, 1951, 34). For these reasons theology is tasked with clarifying and expounding and ‘expressing a dimension of being which can only be apprehended by a specific form of human sensibility’ (See K. Ward, 2002, 20).

<sup>483</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, xviii.

<sup>484</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 119.

<sup>485</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 17.

<sup>486</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 175.

imposes objectifying thinking upon them and thereby drags the ciphers down into the distorting context of the subject-object dichotomy. All attempts to prove or explain the ciphers destroys them, for such attempts annihilate precisely that which allows the ciphers to come alive for human beings and open the way to Transcendence, namely, existential participation.<sup>487</sup>

The approach to Transcendence is in other words, dependent upon the existential self, upon Existenz, which alone can know Transcendence. There can be no Transcendence until 'an Existenz takes original aim at it in a boundary situation'.<sup>488</sup> Jaspers means to say that even in Existenz one can hardly be said to be encountering something markedly 'other' about Transcendence, as though it could be routinely exhibited as an example of common knowledge. Transcendence has to be evanescent, but not extant!<sup>489</sup> There is nothing here to be grasped or affirmed. To be sure, strictly speaking, for Jaspers the negation of determinability *is* the logic of transcendence,<sup>490</sup> meaning that it really cannot be known apart from personal involvement.<sup>491</sup> As Jaspers puts it in *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*: 'What speaks in ciphers is not heard by any intellect seeking sense experience and proof, only by the freedom of Existenz, with which Transcendence communicates in that language'.<sup>492</sup> Or in *Reason and Existenz*:

When Existenz understands itself, it is not like my understanding of another, nor the sort of understanding whose contents can be abstracted from the person understanding, nor a sort of looking at; rather it is an origin which itself first arises in its own self-clarification. It is not like sharing in something else, but is at once the understanding and the being of what is understood.<sup>493</sup>

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, 175. This is also well expressed by K. Hoffman: 'The truth of a cipher is not universal, but as unique as the person who beholds this "truth." Its lack of clarity is not one which can be resolved by a perfection of the means at our disposal' (See K. Hoffman, 'The Basic Concepts of Jaspers Philosophy', 108).

<sup>488</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 61.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>490</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 174.

<sup>491</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

<sup>492</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 96.

<sup>493</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 63. This is expressed well in the summary comments of Ward to the effect that 'Rather than asking what the word 'God' stands for, you should ask, 'How is it used?' and you have to observe, not theorise, that it is used to evoke and sustain *a way of seeing the world which cannot be expressed in any other way*' (See K. Ward, 2002, 208). My emphasis.

Hence as Jaspers puts it, 'True being cannot be found in a sense that we might know. It is to be sought in its *transcendence*, to which only Existenz...can ever relate'.<sup>494</sup> Inevitably, ciphers are the currency of an expressly existential reality, and hence Law's point that ciphers and *existential appropriation* are 'correlative concepts'.<sup>495</sup> In these senses the 'question of transcendence is thus not a problem of rationality but of existential decision. The truth of ciphers is accessible only through our appropriation of them, which enables us to live in their world'.<sup>496</sup> Clearly for Jaspers it is a fixation to solely identify communicability with the subject-object dichotomy. It follows from the lack of objectivity and universal viewpoints from which to debate what Jaspers claims are existential realities, that a different stance is being envisioned.

In other words, to say that Transcendence is inconceivable apart from the existential exertions of Existenz is to claim that transcendent Being 'is accessible to human beings only when they respond properly to it'.<sup>497</sup> Ciphers require 'intuitive participation',<sup>498</sup> and often at the deeper levels of existence. It is possible because the intuitive immediacy with which the person poses the question 'what is there' can reveal a transcendent depth to the real world. Recalling again the distinction drawn in the Introduction, Dasein may be the human factual situation and predicament in which the person must toil in the 'confinements of objectifying language',<sup>499</sup> but no purely immanent 'spectatorship',<sup>500</sup> will answer the question posed by the presence of Transcendence. And hence the obvious contrast with Peacocke's agenda:

In general then, for the clarification of Existenz, for metaphysics, and for transcending philosophical world-orientation, for all regions of philosophy, the principle holds that, whenever that which philosophically indicates, appeals to, evokes, allows to be seen, renders present, whenever it is handled as a known content in the mere forms of understanding, it loses precisely that content which was intended in the philosophy. At

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<sup>494</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 63.

<sup>495</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 177.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>498</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 165.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>500</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 86.

the same time it is fraudulent to derive therefrom some fixed doctrine as though it were valid for the understanding.<sup>501</sup>

Formally this means that 'Being-itself cannot be apprehended directly as some kind of entity cognizable through categorical formulae but rather as a *presence* elicited dialectically in all depth communication'.<sup>502</sup> Meaning that "book knowledge" is invariably external to and less than actual experience and encounter,<sup>503</sup> as Jaspers said, a person may speak out of these experiences but not of them, at least not 'of them' in any equivalent sense. Nothing pertaining to the question of Transcendence in these terms is an occurrence for a bystander-attitude, ciphers *necessitate* personal investment.<sup>504</sup> While science is aimed at knowledge of objects, 'philosophy rests on an *awareness* of the being of man and the being of the world as a whole'.<sup>505</sup>

But the reader might note and consider that the predication of either theology, or philosophy, on a certain 'inner posture',<sup>506</sup> in no sense negates the value or quality of the forthcoming insights. Ciphers are 'neither cogent nor hypothetical, neither plausible nor probable'.<sup>507</sup> They are 'weighed in altogether different scales'.<sup>508</sup> This reality does not, necessarily, render the process subjectivist in a pejorative sense. As the section next section will attempt to clarify, it does not have to be an occasion for epistemological suicide! If that is the case, then cipher theory articulates, once again, a form of listening and response that alone is clear in the historical and 'existential moment and cannot be generalized'.<sup>509</sup> There is no public knowledge of Transcendence. Alongside a pluriform view of truth, and a participatory hermeneutic, Jaspers demonstrates a holistic view of rationality.

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<sup>501</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 121-122.

<sup>502</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 59.

<sup>503</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for 'Experience', *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 2, 307.

<sup>504</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 34.

<sup>505</sup> J. Collins, 'Jaspers on Science and Philosophy', 131.

<sup>506</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 8.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>509</sup> K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, 82.

### 3. A PRELIMINARY CRITIQUE OF CIPHER THEORY

What is the adequacy of cipher theory in representing the alleged transcendent depth to reality? If there is an underlying transcendent basis to all of existence it is only ever glimpsed, for Jaspers, in the evanescent ciphers. But with no intrinsic cogency, and depending on the apparent destruction of any claims to epistemic warrant, the tendency for cipher theory to lapse into unverifiable circularity is endless! As Peacocke justly commented in the previous discussion 'relativism rules' (fn 458) and Jaspers certainly provides an intellectual commitment to ensuring strict rationality is cast in a subordinate role to the 'existential self'. It is a predicament not helped by the fact that for Jaspers almost anything can perform a cipher function, be that reality itself, or even aspects of existence as nebulous as thoughts or fantasies.<sup>510</sup> This is precisely the problem of prioritising the existential self in the way he does.<sup>511</sup> What is true and what is mere fantasy or projection or an imaginative construction? It is arguably impossible to say.

It is a situation that leads the hermeneutically sophisticated, for example Ricoeur, to describe Jaspers' thought as a '*lyric philosophy which tends towards a disquieting aestheticism*'.<sup>512</sup> So much so that the German Lutheran New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann disdainfully referred to the intricacies of ciphers as 'magical language'.<sup>513</sup> With the whole of existence potentially carrying a cipher capacity there is a high likelihood that obfuscating and misleading claims as to 'what is there' will flourish and subjectivity degenerate into subjectivism. Hence in more recent times Law has commented that Jaspers' theory runs the risk of 'dissolving into vagueness'.<sup>514</sup> For *evanescent* by

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<sup>510</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 95. Further still, and in characteristically obtuse language Jaspers comments that there 'is nothing that could not be a cipher. Throughout existence indistinct vibrations and voices seem to express something' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 147) in the form of 'endlessly varied significations' (See *Ibid.*, 93). See also, Jaspers' comment that the 'reading of ciphers produces not the slightest knowledge that might apply in world orientation' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 149). And in this regard Lash' warning is certainly notable! Namely that certain theologies of Transcendence, and Jaspers regularly refers to 'god', are 'vague to the point of vacuity' (See N. Lash, 1988, 99).

<sup>511</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 156.

<sup>512</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 638. As Jaspers advises, the appearance of Transcendence must always take a transient and ephemeral form (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 35).

<sup>513</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 125.

<sup>514</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 186. Or as K. Hoffman comments, 'their endless ambiguity is their very essence' (See K. Hoffman, 'The Basic Concepts of Jaspers Philosophy', 108).



definition means 'on the point of vanishing...on the point of becoming zero, infinitesimal...imperceptibly minute...not permanent'.<sup>515</sup>

There are so many possible fleeting connotations to cipher theory that it is practically impossible to sort and fix the epistemological legitimacy of any given cipher event. As a consequence of prioritising Existenz as the sole medium through which Transcendence may be encountered the heightening of this philosophical consciousness is as Olson perceptively remarks, for Jaspers the 'analogue of salvation'.<sup>516</sup> And therefore resolving the question 'what is there' simply in terms of cipher theory is aptly described, at least as a religious exercise, where Transcendence is named 'God', as 'salvation by ambiguity'.<sup>517</sup> Jaspers is so intent on severing any durable sense in which the person can conceive and relate to Transcendence, that he permanently disabuses them of any form of *objective consolation*.<sup>518</sup> This, together with his comments from the previous Chapter electing not to attempt an objective formulation of Transcendence, even via subjectivity as Rahner and Lonergan proceeded, is unmistakably 'anti-ontological' language. It stands in curious juxtaposition to his otherwise robust view of existence.

What, then, can be said about the objection that a theory of ciphers present a quasi-magical and disquieting aestheticism? Such objections can arguably be met by recalling the earlier valuation (p. 24f) placed on raw experience as a category fundamental to life, and one at odds with the capacity to describe it retrospectively. Cipher theory is complex and subtle, but then so, apparently, is reality. Certainly there is value to the principle of economy in formal logic, colloquially known as Ockham's Razor, i.e. the simplest explanation is always the best explanation and therefore entities are not to be unnecessarily multiplied in any given explanation. But how relevant is simplicity to a description of the human experience of Transcendence? The human relation to an all encompassing transcendent ground is exceptionally difficult to describe in any formal way. And Transcendence as a possible depth to all of existence is likely, if it is to be

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<sup>515</sup> SOED, 689.

<sup>516</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 60.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>518</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 616.

anything, to be polyvalent.<sup>519</sup> And so its appearance is *necessarily* diffuse. This is observed well in *Sacramentum Mundi* where it is argued that because Transcendence is ‘so manifold and incalculable, all the phenomena of human transcendence, even in the guise of symbol, are theologically interesting and significant’.<sup>520</sup> K. Hoffmann also captures the insight:

Whichever direction we pursue our quest for Being, it becomes clear that Being is not of one kind and that, as a corollary, the relation of thought to Being is not univocal. Being is grasped in the mind in the multiplicity of its appearances. It is evident that Jaspers must reject every monistic philosophy.<sup>521</sup>

Therefore a complex and intricate and personally compelling philosophy such as Jaspers offers provides an intuitively satisfying way of accessing and comprehending the many depth dimensions encountered as Transcendence is fathomed. Arguably to wash ones hands of this kind of experiential complexity simply serves to demonstrate ‘how quick we are to oversimplify our lives, to trim the interest, to dull the colour...to flatten out our life for the sake of the comfort of predictability’.<sup>522</sup> If Transcendence is at the root of all objective appearances, as Jaspers believes it is, it must, if it is to appear at all, be *polymorphic*, achieving intensely variable if fleeting forms. It thus necessitates a heavily circumstantial epistemology. In this respect a cipher theory of Transcendence is a plausible and strangely practical contribution to thought. It serves to reject the unjustified assumption that all knowledge is restricted to the sphere of science, outside of which all existence is apparently ‘unknowable’.<sup>523</sup> The first point of defence is (i), that a

<sup>519</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 171. Jaspers argues continually throughout his literary corpus that the phenomenality of Being cannot help but be impressed upon the intellect (e.g. K. Jaspers, 2003, 79).

<sup>520</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for ‘Transcendence’, *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 6, 281.

<sup>521</sup> K. Hoffman, ‘The Basic Concepts of Jaspers Philosophy’, in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 98.

<sup>522</sup> W. J. Wildman & L. A. Brothers, ‘A Neuropsychological-Semiotic Model of Religious Experiences’, in R. J. Russell *et al.*, eds., *Neurosciences and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications & Berkeley: Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2002), 411. Lehman precedes the aforementioned definition of transcendence (p. 60) by suggesting that the ‘fluid multiplicity and constant mobility of beings’ makes their origin a compelling question (See K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for ‘Transcendence’, 1970, 275).

<sup>523</sup> R. Trigg, *Reality at Risk*, 58. A. C. Thiselton summarily notes the general danger of empiricist methodology degenerating into an exclusively positivist ontology (See A. C. Thiselton, 2002, 280).

theoretically diffuse phenomenon that is realised experientially necessitates a malleable and reflexive epistemological stance.

Two further and tightly related epistemological insights of equally serious interest follow from admittance that a polymorphic theory is necessary for a polyvalent phenomenon. Firstly, in admitting complexity and providing a philosophical justification for experience outside the strict codification of knowledge it mitigates against the tendency to abdicate ontology to the natural sciences.<sup>524</sup> How does it do so? Recall that Transcendence is clearly not an object of knowledge. But in accordance with the comments made about the Enlightenment project and the tendency to equate knowledge with the ideals of impartiality, objectivity and universal viewpoints, it is possible that the Transcendence is ipso facto regarded as ‘not a proper question’.<sup>525</sup> Lash most aptly remarked in a comparable context, that ‘the theologian who suggests that grace is *not* a thing, and neither is God, nor is the human mind, will find that such suggestions are comprehensively misunderstood as denials of the reality of mind, and grace, and God’.<sup>526</sup> But as is becoming increasingly clear, Jaspers’ negative response to the question of ontology resided in his belief that an individual can existentially but not ontologically transcend the subject-object dichotomy.<sup>527</sup> In articulating the means for a leap past mere objective appearances,<sup>528</sup> Jaspers, offers a metaphysic but not one that will ossify into a series of ontological predicates. A difficult paragraph from Olson expresses this clearly:

the logical paradoxes of transcendental reflection point to a deeper reality through paradox whereby one apprehends a reality which can only be termed haltingly the “Super-sensible” or Transcendence-Itself; a reality which is not known as an object but which beckons as “cipher”. Ontology, then, is reconstituted as existential metaphysics.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of ‘Religion’*, 117.

<sup>525</sup> For example, Searle, whose realist approach to existence was esteemed in the Introduction regards it as ‘bad taste to even raise the question of God’s existence’ (See J. Searle, 2000, 34). Further, Peacocke, who was a Christian theist, comments that theological reasoning is ‘regarded as not worthy of reasonable ascent by modern thinkers’ (See A. Peacocke, 2001, 21).

<sup>526</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of ‘Religion’*, 118.

<sup>527</sup> D. Law, *Inspiration*, 189.

<sup>528</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 314.

<sup>529</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 80.

Clearly the relation of the person to Transcendence, it is conjectured, can only occur on this existential ground that is realised in a non-objective way.<sup>530</sup> In these terms, Jaspers' system of thought allows 'more ontology' to be realised than science can grasp, albeit in a paradoxical manner that will not allow that same ontological commitment to be solidified. It exists only as a limit that can be surpassed existentially. In other words, the inner logic of ciphers accounts for Transcendence, in answer to the question 'what is there' in a manner that would remain veiled without this expression of ontology that can only be appreciated existentially. Cipher theory justifies an ontological commitment to Transcendence whilst failing the criteria of objective knowledge. If reality is accepted to have an unassailable subjective element, i.e. not all knowledge is strictly positive, then the second defence is relevant, (ii) cipher theory helps to realise and nuance a wider set of ontological commitments than can be realised by natural science.

So far ciphers have been claimed to ably express the colour and multiplicity of experience, and in so doing prevent ontology lapsing into positivism. The final relevant defence of cipher theory stems from both insights, and presents a precise theoretical concern. A central tenet of the critical realism briefly advocated in the Introduction that is arguably met by a cipher theory recognises, therefore, following (i) and (ii), that there can be no universal epistemology. As McGrath comments, 'entities are knowable only through ways that conform to their idiosyncratic structure'.<sup>531</sup> In other words, if Transcendence is 'real' then it clearly is not an instance of knowledge in any conventionally acceptable way. This either means it simply does not exist meaningfully for human life, or that it must be known, as has been argued, in a manner that accords with its nature. If it is not an object it cannot be known in an objective way, and therefore must be known in other terms, hence the claim that the language of ciphers is generally illegible and unintelligible before the demands of cogency allied to clear demonstration.

In practical terms, ciphers can provide a compelling justification for a participatory hermeneutic. G. Hughes, for example, has described the importance of learning how to

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<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>531</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 207.

notice God as not immediately obvious, that diligent practice acquires new attunement and perception so as to reveal what is not 'ordinarily' understood.<sup>532</sup> If this is a serious suggestion it appears to commit the individual, in the context of the present argument, to all the densely varied exigencies of subjectivity through which they learn to notice the ontological priority of Transcendence to all their individual acts of experience and understanding. Ciphers offer a compelling example of the need to adopt an epistemology relevant to the area of existence being encountered. It therefore follows that Transcendence is knowable only 'in a way which is not susceptible to the normal canons of our discursive intellect'.<sup>533</sup> As Bhaskar points out, 'god manifests himself or herself or itself in a variety of different ways or is accessed by different people in different traditions in a plurality of different ways. This is exactly on a par with any scientific object'.<sup>534</sup>

Hence 'each stratum must be investigated by a methodology which is determined *a posteriori* by its ontology'.<sup>535</sup> The picture of a theory of ciphers recognises that not all of human experience has a solid epistemic foundation. In developing such a view it is therefore arguable that the reality quotient<sup>536</sup> of a particular activity of knowing is inalienably predicated on the form of intentionality assumed, i.e. of 'learning to notice God as not immediately obvious'. The flexibility receptivity of cipher theory is a welcome contribution to thought in this regard. As Jaspers said, Transcendence 'manifests itself in my own attitude toward it'.<sup>537</sup> It clearly suggests that a given and particular spirit of enquiry, posing the question 'what is there', is likely to yield different results from another, perhaps more aggressive mode of enquiry. If objective cogency is

<sup>532</sup> G. Hughes, 'What does Spirit add to Mind?'. Unpublished paper given at a conference in the University of Limerick in 2001. Of related note, is Searle's observation in a different context of the erroneous assumption that for something to be 'real, it must be equally accessible to all competent observers' (See J. Searle, 1999, 16).

<sup>533</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 32. This is arguably a form of the argument which claims that 'human knowledge and experience are profoundly identical' (See K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for 'Experience', 1968, 307). In other words, experience per se has genuine credulity and evidential force unless it can be shown definitively that no such experience is possible.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Bhaskar, in precisely this context, suggests that 'epistemic relativism is consistent with ontological realism about god'. In other words there is a plurality of epistemological viewpoints from which the Transcendent ground is accessed.

<sup>535</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 224.

<sup>536</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 175.

<sup>537</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 61.

demand, a certain amount of objective cogency will be established, but not all of reality is objective. Suffice to say, summarily, once again picking up the tenor of the argumentation of Oakeshott from the Introduction, the insight that the 'character of what is experienced is, in the strictest sense, correlative to the manner in which it is experienced',<sup>538</sup> is crucial to the interpretation of Transcendence. The final defence of the Preliminary Critique is therefore, (iii) epistemology is to be determined a posteriori by the ontology of the domain under scrutiny.

So on balance, there are good reasons for retaining and developing a cipher theory of Transcendence. Object knowledge orientates the person but does not exhaust a description of reality because of experiential depth. Transcendence, if perhaps 'meta-ontological', is not 'meta-experiential'.<sup>539</sup> A theory of ciphers helps justify the insistence of modern critical realist approaches to reality, namely that ontology is not abdicated to the natural sciences in view of the necessity of investigating reality in terms and procedures relevant to the 'domain' under consideration. There is no point seeking a cogent universal viewpoint from which to determine the evidential force of Transcendence as "real", and as a possible experience. As a conventional definition of Transcendence has proposed, the 'first thing to make clear is under what conditions the word "God" can be linked with the "depths of being" so as to disclose their meaning'.<sup>540</sup> Ciphers are arguably an excellent way of understanding and therefore rendering these depths.

Finally, to gather and summarise these points, the reader might find it helpful to note Ward's perceptive analysis of the structure of reality which posits an infinite number of perfectly new and unpredictable 'things' and 'states'.<sup>541</sup> In such terms the world is arguably awash with the 'secondary phenomena'<sup>542</sup> of Transcendence as its complex

<sup>538</sup> M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, 9. Lash's arguments are also once again valuable and relevant in this context, running, as they do, against the notion of finding God by compartmentalising or abstraction (See N. Lash, 1996, 174). Hence the proposal that God is to be known participatively (See N. Lash, 1988, 111).

<sup>539</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 33.

<sup>540</sup> K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for 'Transcendence', *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 6, 280.

<sup>541</sup> K. Ward, *In Defence of the Soul*, 50.

<sup>542</sup> E. Underhill, *The Essentials of Mysticism: and Other Essays*, (Oxford: One World, 1999), 29.

signals are felt in innumerable existential predicaments. Ciphers provide a sublime and theoretically nuanced approach to disclosing these depths, these multiple and constantly renewed ‘ambassadors of transcendent reality’.<sup>543</sup> Indeed as O’Hear comments, and perhaps the reader might consider the citation alongside his earlier one (fn 451), ‘it is in aesthetic experience that our self-consciousness can best find some quietus in its restless movement between enmeshment in the flow of life and the search for something transcendent to justify its beliefs and practices absolutely’.<sup>544</sup> Ciphers, once again, can help the person at least begin to realise the aesthetic and even luminous depth to existence. All that is required of the knower is that they set aside the confusion that equates truth and reality with cogent accuracy<sup>545</sup> and await the experience of pure Being that might, perhaps, become fleetingly present and clear.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 171.

<sup>544</sup> A. O’Hear, *Beyond Evolution*, 30.

<sup>545</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 164.

<sup>546</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 23.

A TEST CASE IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION DIALOGUE:  
CIPHERS OR INFERENCE?

Why is the cipher theory of a German existentialist relevant to the contemporary relationship between scientific explanations of natural reality and the discourse about natural reality stemming from theistically minded scientists? If ambiguity is the essence of ciphers it would seem peculiar to suggest their relevance to science which was defined earlier as denoting the 'knowledge of objects that have been systematised and related to other pieces of knowledge about other physical facts of verified sense experience' (p. 9). In the analysis to follow the reader should recall Jaspers' earlier contention that a transition is possible 'from the world of objects initially appearing in answer to the question 'what is there', towards an experience of *Being itself* from which all object appearance 'issues', so to speak' (p. 89). It was alleged that there is a 'non-knowing' way in which Transcendence may be experienced as the background of various objectivities. 'Ciphers' is the term used by Jaspers to denote the fleeting contacts with this apparently transcendent ground.

The possible presence of ciphers in scientific discourse confronts the present writer at least as a striking occurrence worthy of analysis.<sup>547</sup> But before this claim is elucidated and justified, consideration will be given, as proposed in the Introduction, to a competing epistemology, namely 'inference to the best explanation' as it similarly seeks to fathom the question 'what is there'. The reader might also therefore like to recall that in the Introduction the section titled World Orientation (i): Object Knowledge discussed the human relationship with an objective physical environment presupposed in common sense and developed analytically in the sciences. What does this process of discovery and explanation amount to? In Chapter One it was suggested that the objective presentation of the verifiable facts of the world make available an agreed epistemic ground upon which humanity may stand. As Jaspers said, these descriptions of reality are available in

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<sup>547</sup> The reader might wish to note, the essence of the thesis argument is appearing in a further revised and improved form to the originally accepted paper, in the *Heythrop Journal* in the summer of 2008.



‘magnificent drafts’. Indeed the “book of nature” is of staggering exceptionality. Be it a single atom of gold, the x-ray of an Argonaut shell, a pure silicon crystal, ivy pollen under an electron microscope, the dizzying uniformity and precision of stars around the North Celestial pole or the Antares and the Rho Optiiveti Nebulae – with their blueish glow, an admixture of cooling gas and dust scattered with young stars 540 light years away, the expressive fecundity of the universe is beyond adequate conception. As the sophisticated procedures of modern science grapple with this ‘variety and infinite abundance’ of objective Being, a question is raised: what, if anything, does the garnering of information about the world-process in its complex arrays of matter and motion ‘speak’ with regards to the question of Transcendence, of God? What does the human capacity to generate representative theories about the natural order have to say about the possibility of a transcendent Being?<sup>548</sup>

Like Jaspers, Peacocke also shares a discontent with the verisimilitude of finite cognitive attempts to describe existence in all its fullness.<sup>549</sup> Both thinkers share the broad consensus that science can reasonably be understood to describe existence. However, each subsequently approached the question of Transcendence with very different intellectual commitments. On the basis of the ‘magnificent drafts’ Peacocke seeks to *infer* a transcendent meaning to existence to account for its fecundity, its beauty and depth, in other words to adequately account for the identity of the universe as ‘*supremely and unsurpassedly rational*’.<sup>550</sup> Jaspers, however, it ought to be clear from the foregoing discussion, does not believe Transcendence can be inferred at all. Recall his suggestion

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<sup>548</sup> The reader might like to note that although the thesis is a response to the ‘science and religion debate’ an explicit schematic to ‘model’ the interaction of science and theology is not intended. Given the ontological principle that ‘Being is one’ convergence is theoretically reasonable, but the vastness of knowledge, human cognitive finitude, and the need for specialisation make the relation implausibly difficult to describe. Neither an unhappy alliance, robbing either disciplines of their distinctive ‘tones’, or a total severance, are appropriate. Despite various attempts to model the relation, the present thesis asserts the stratified pluriform character of reality, recall, for example, the juxtaposition posed in the Introduction between object knowledge and experiential depth, and urges that such distinctiveness be recognised, meaning, among other things that ‘one area cannot become *normative* for the essential content of another’ (See J. Dillenberger, 1961, 292). W. P. Alston’s epistemological nuance is welcome in this regard, where he comments that: ‘Important implications of widely separated fields for one another are the exception rather than the rule in the intellectual realm, despite the current vogue of interdisciplinary studies’, in his essay, ‘Divine Action, Human Freedom, and the Laws of Nature’, (See R. J. Russell *et al.*, 1993).

<sup>549</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 22.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

that what shows Transcendence to the person 'is not a metaphysical hypothesis in which we infer and calculate what being might be; it is the tangibility of the cipher' (fn 395). The gulf spanning the finite and the infinite cannot be crossed by mere inference. Before elucidating cipher theory with concrete examples,<sup>551</sup> it is time to consider Peacocke's inference based strategy in more detail.

## 1. INFERENCE TO THE BEST EXPLANATION

'God', said Hegel, the German idealist philosopher cited above, 'does not offer himself for observation'.<sup>552</sup> Hegel's reticence is not anomalous in philosophical theology, indeed the:

classical view says that God is non-material, not limited in any way, not composed of parts, timeless, immutable and impassable (not affected by anything in any way). These very abstract terms all follow in a very elegant way from the basic assertion that God is 'simple', not divisible even in thought in any way whatsoever. We have to deny of God everything that is true of the universe.<sup>553</sup>

But at the outset, problems arise. If it is axiomatic that the natural world, accessible through the cerebration of objects, is not God, then one cannot move from empirical data to a transempirical reality. A claim Jaspers would clearly uphold. Within the general process of reification identified in the Introduction 'anything which is so foreign that it cannot immediately be named is treated with suspicion, interest or fear, until it can be

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<sup>551</sup> It is a well documented weakness of Jaspers that he failed to substantiate his theory of ciphers with sufficient examples. Olson comments that Jaspers explicates his philosophising only 'very rarely in relation to what might be regarded as concrete examples of their symbolization' (See A. M. Olson, 1979, 114). One might actually ask if Jaspers provides *any* examples at all. Therefore the second section of this chapter will attempt to meet this deficiency with one specific elucidation, namely the element to be published that was referred to above, by examining the apparent presence of ciphers in scientific experience, theory and discourse.

<sup>552</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. I: Introduction and The Concept of Religion*, (London: University of California Press, 1984), 258. The reader might find it helpful to add further context to the present polemic by noting the French philosopher and mathematician B. Pascal's remark: 'I wonder at the hardihood with which such persons undertake to talk about God. In a treatise addressed to infidels they begin with a chapter proving the existence of God from the works of Nature...this only gives their readers grounds for thinking that the proofs of our religion of very weak...It is a remarkable fact that no canonical writer has ever used Nature to prove God' (cited in C.S. Lewis, 1940, 11).

<sup>553</sup> K. Ward, *God*, 140-142.

adequately named'.<sup>554</sup> The problem of the question of Transcendence, which once again is the God question,<sup>555</sup> is that 'there is no name that we might use to gain some leverage on God',<sup>556</sup> and therefore God is simply not an object susceptible to any kind of normal description. But if no description of God is possible then none can be given and if none can be given,<sup>557</sup> how can it be argued that God exists, that there is a transcendent depth, and that it can be experienced? Despite these somewhat apophatic considerations, a massive and fascinating literature has developed in intellectual history, alongside a revolution in empirical procedures, purporting to show signs of consistency between modern theism and conventional and scientific discourse about natural reality.

Socrates (c. 470-c. 399 bc), the Greek philosopher who helped fashion Western thought and his pupil Plato (see fn 271) offered early forms of the argument, as did Aristotle, with Socrates and Plato the most renowned of ancient philosophers, and from there Arabic and Jewish theologians and philosophers of religion, medieval philosophers T. Aquinas and J. D. Scotus (c. 1266-1308), through to G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716),<sup>558</sup> and into the modern era with authors such as William Dembski, Ward, Richard Swinburne, Peacocke, and Ian Barbour.<sup>559</sup> Notwithstanding the energetic exigencies of a questing and synthesising intelligence, explicitly theological "arguments from design" are not unproblematic. They are difficult in two senses. Firstly, in respect of the enduring ambiguity of the objectively described natural world as will shortly be discussed. And secondly because of the tendency to approach Transcendence with 'spectatorship' models of knowledge drawn from the methods of science.<sup>560</sup> However, as Lash explicitly states, if:

<sup>554</sup> L. Geering, *Tomorrow's God: How We Create our Worlds*, (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1994), 22.

<sup>555</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, ix.

<sup>556</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, 177.

<sup>557</sup> D. Jenkins makes a similar argument to this in his essay 'There is no God', (See D. Jenkins, 1990, 3f).

<sup>558</sup> W. L. Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz*, (London: The MacMillan Press, 1980). Craig concludes his historical tour with the affirmation that the cosmological argument remains an open question (p. 291).

<sup>559</sup> A representative modern literature would include: *'Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology'*, *'God, Chance and Necessity'*, *'The Coherence of Theism'*, *'Paths from Science Towards God'*, *'Nature, Human Nature and God'*, the details of which are in the Bibliography.

<sup>560</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, 79. From the religious standpoint, as Lash observes, it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth century that 'Christian theology abandoned its traditional responsibility for the interpretation of Scripture and took for its task and territory the explanation of the natural world' (p. 247).

spectatorial empiricism supposes all objects of knowledge to be known (namely, by constructing mental representations of them), it is certain that whatever is thus known could not be God...I am simply protesting against the fatuous illusion that we could ever discover or come across God as a fact about the world.<sup>561</sup>

Ipsa facto, John Hick is more cautious than many and notably, for the following discussion, more than Peacocke, when weighing the explanatory relevance of a supposed 'catalogue of providential arrangements'<sup>562</sup> in the material order, because, 'if the question is whether from all this we can validly infer God, the answer has to be No'.<sup>563</sup> He goes on to say that there 'is indeed no way in which a description of the physical development of any universe bearing a family resemblance to our own can be strictly compatible either with theism or with atheism. Certainly the presently observed and deduced facts concerning the universe's expansion are religiously ambivalent'.<sup>564</sup> At this, cosmological, level, there is no sufficient, deductive argument for the existence of God.<sup>565</sup> It may be argued that, in W. Paley's 'Watchmaker' argument for example, the world is stamped with the hallmarks of contrivance and design.<sup>566</sup> Yet whatever arguments are assembled in favour of fine tuning,<sup>567</sup> the 'watchmaker', competes Dawkins, 'that is cumulative natural selection is blind to the future and has no long-term goal'.<sup>568</sup> And indeed Hick goes on to say 'there may be yet other kinds of natural explanation. The postulation of a divine source of natural beauty is thus optional; and once again the religious ambiguity of the world remains intact'.<sup>569</sup> In any case, echoing Lash, Andrew Moore questions if it is even theologically sound to predicate the question of a transcendent meaning on

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<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. The significance of Lash's point is understood to mean that no objectivity is so unambiguously resonant as to wrest existential import from human subjectivity. Lash continues by saying that 'God is not a thing, an object over against us, silently lurking in the metaphysical undergrowth'. Suffice to say, that once 'thing' and 'object' are dismissed, along with 'fact', in relation to the question of Transcendence, alternative approaches have to be considered, i.e. inferring something to be the case, or *experiencing* it in ciphers.

<sup>562</sup> J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), 85.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>565</sup> P. Clayton, 'Theology and the Physical Sciences', 348.

<sup>566</sup> P. Vardy, *The Puzzle of God*, (London: Fount, 1999), 95.

<sup>567</sup> In this regard, see for example J. Leslie's comments that fine tuning is 'genuine evidence' for God. J. Leslie, 'Fine Tuning', in P. Helm, ed., *Faith and Reason*, (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 277.

<sup>568</sup> R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 50.

<sup>569</sup> J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 94.

arguments from the natural order.<sup>570</sup> Such are surely confirmation that an 'Enlightenment-inspired and apologetically conceived philosophical agenda has insinuated itself into Christian philosophical reflection'.<sup>571</sup> Or as Lash puts it in a critique of arguments from design:

what Swinburne (and, I suspect, many English-speaking philosophers of religion today) takes to constitute a common "core" of belief originally designated a set of beliefs, and a mode of believing, *alternative* to what were thought to be the beliefs and procedures of traditional Christianity.<sup>572</sup>

Not surprisingly, some thinkers detect a theological restlessness within the divinity conceived by modern theists.<sup>573</sup> Indeed, Swinburne has even been referred to as an 'irreligious view of religion...Conversion, passion, conviction, and total love of God seem strangely inappropriate on Swinburne's account of faith. It is hardly the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'.<sup>574</sup> Alternatively, for a further example, Ward cites Roger Penrose in *God, Chance and Necessity*, stating that the chances of a universe like the one in which we exist across a 'phase space' of possible universes is somewhere in the region of 1 in  $10^{123}$ . In other words, a number so unlikely it would require every proton in the universe, and more, if a single digit was written on each one!<sup>575</sup> Such probabilities are inevitable conjectures of a theorising mind but are somewhat tangential, and in the very least, abstract. Notably for the present argument they are perhaps anti-existentialist in trying to settle the question of Transcendence apparently aside from subjective concerns. There is indeed in this sense something odd in trying to conceive and answer the question of Transcendence in terms of probability and speculation.<sup>576</sup>

Part of the problem of claiming the natural world evidences God or Transcendence, explicable in inference based explanation, is the 'great deal of evidence to suggest that it

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<sup>570</sup> A. Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith: God, Grammar, and Meaning*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 12.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>572</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 103.

<sup>573</sup> K. Surin, cited in A. Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith*, 34.

<sup>574</sup> I. Markham, cited in A. Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith*, 17.

<sup>575</sup> K. Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity*, 43-44.

<sup>576</sup> K. Ward, *God*, 189.

[the natural environment] bears the mark more of a horrifying joke than a vale of soul-making'.<sup>577</sup> Indeed, as Donald McKinnon continues, no argument from design 'has ever finally silenced the cry elicited by tragic experience'.<sup>578</sup> So claims to the apparent stability and coherence of reality actually function both as a challenge as well as a support to Christianity.<sup>579</sup> What design-based explanation can there be for the 'less-than-optimal',<sup>580</sup> occurrences in natural development? And hence the available evidences provided by the scientific engagement of the natural world provide an entirely variable content for interpretation. Items secured from the functioning whole may support or actually contradict the 'design' argument.<sup>581</sup> In Hick's summation:

It seems, then, that the universe maintains its inscrutable ambiguity. In some aspects it invites while in others it repels a religious response. It permits both a religious and a naturalistic faith, but haunted in each case by a contradictory possibility that can never be exorcised. Any realistic analysis of religious belief and experience, and any naturalistic defence of the rationality of religious conviction, must therefore start from this situation of systematic ambiguity.<sup>582</sup>

It would therefore appear that a 'strong view' which deduces monotheism on the basis of investigative steps that proceed from natural science to apparently transcendent knowledge are, strictly speaking, making an illegitimate transition. Or, if it is legitimate, there are arguably more fulfilling and experiential ways of journeying, as Jaspers would have it. The Chair of Molecular Immunology at the Babraham Institute and author of *Rebuilding the Matrix, Science and Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Dennis Alexander, shares an equivalent position to Hick in respect of the declarative theocentric scope of naturalism.<sup>583</sup> It is possible to accommodate, for example, evolutionary biology, within a theistic or atheistic world-view. Theism is consistent with scientific realism in these

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<sup>577</sup> D. MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology* 5, (London: SCM, 1979), 120.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>579</sup> W. B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism*, 248.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>581</sup> In this regard, P. Vardy's summary argument is of note that both science and theology end in 'unexplained mysteries' (See P. Vardy, 1999, 111).

<sup>582</sup> J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 124.

<sup>583</sup> Correspondence with Dr Alexander 09/07/05.

terms.<sup>584</sup> It just cannot be established on the basis of a neutral observation of external reality. Actually, as Alexander points out, the data of science papers are always presented, from the varying perspectives of the scientists, in accordance with a favoured model of explanation, thought more or less probable. Quite evidently, as a human activity the best way to understand science, to reiterate Freeman's earlier point, is to understand the individual human beings who practice it.<sup>585</sup> Some may reach to theocentric explanations, others may not.

The systematic ambiguity besetting the significance of the natural world is witnessed to, with unmistakable clarity, in the conflicting views of numerous scientists. Some reach theistic conclusions similar to Peacocke, others do not. Eminent thinkers of the calibre of Popper and Nobel Laureate and Melbourne brain-scientist John Eccles, were able to work on an intensive joint publication whilst retaining divergent conclusions. Popper described himself as agnostic, Eccles a theist: 'Each of us not only deeply respects the position of the other, but sympathises with it'.<sup>586</sup> Evidence for the reasonableness of theism can be found in Werner Heisenberg, Einstein, or Max Plank.<sup>587</sup> Swinburne, once again, points to the elegance and simplicity of the inference to theism, while Dawkins objects that a 'deity who keeps a billion fingers on a billion electrons is about the most complicated hypothesis one could envisage'.<sup>588</sup> François Jacob, winner of the Nobel Prize for biochemistry, wrote that 'for the scientist engaged in science the question of the existence of God does not arise' while Jean Delameau held that 'science is an invitation to turn towards God'.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 243.

<sup>585</sup> Arguably both scientific speculation and theistic speculation are projections. Both are attempts to interpret the real world, and arguably both conjectures about Transcendent significance meaning and value, or projections about multiple universes extrapolate far beyond the available evidence.

<sup>586</sup> K. Popper & J. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, viii. Aptly, religious believers must 'seriously consider the possibility that alternative, secular explanations can be given of what they take to be experiences of the divine' (See W. J. Abraham, 'Soft Rationalism', in M. Peterson *et al.*, 1996, 93).

<sup>587</sup> Various cited in J. C. Eccles, *The Human Psyche*, 244f.

<sup>588</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 232.

<sup>589</sup> Cited in D. Morin, *How to Understand God*, (London: SCM Press, 1990), 28, 45, respectively.

Transparently, in each case the investigators must either be considering differing worlds, or, it must be concluded that the question of whether Transcendence can meaningfully be said to be ‘there’ cannot be settled on empirical grounds. A long list of competing views could be assembled to support an “either/or” thesis. And hence the relevance of John Hedley Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor’s assessment that after all ‘key terms in the reconstruction of nature, such as ‘mechanism’, ‘law’, ‘power’, ‘conservation’, natural ‘selection’, and many more, are metaphors susceptible of competing meanings – some theistic, some entirely naturalistic’.<sup>590</sup> The creative exchanges of law and chance deliberated by Peacocke may be significant theistically, or, they may not be.<sup>591</sup> Suffice to note the argument that such processes, however sophisticated and comprehensively conceived in the mind of the natural scientist ‘do not in themselves give theological meaning’.<sup>592</sup>

Notwithstanding these neutral affirmations of the apparent relation of the natural world to a transcendent ground, inference to the best explanation (IBE) is held to be able to infer a theistic significance from the reality of the universe as it is available to human investigation. IBE is the epistemology advocated by Peacocke for establishing general knowledge about God, preferred to either outright a priori claims, or traditional sources of authority.<sup>593</sup> According to IBE, ‘we infer what would, if true, provide the best of the competing explanations of the data we can generate’.<sup>594</sup> Hence, when presented with an IBE claim the reader is encouraged to see those features of a case which ‘severally cooperate in favour of the conclusion’.<sup>595</sup> Critically, in a world in which the intellectually visceral standard of truth is its measurability, objectivity and universality, IBE is held to

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<sup>590</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 233.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>592</sup> J. Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science*, (London: Collins, 1961), 292.

<sup>593</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 32.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. In this regard, the reader might note Peacocke’s stated reliance on Peter Lipton: ‘The motivating idea behind this account of scientific inference is that, although indefinitely many hypotheses will always be compatible with the available data, scientists infer the hypothesis which would, if correct, provide the best explanation for the phenomena those data describe’ (See P. Lipton, ed., 1995, xviii). Peacocke’s advocacy of inference based explanation is also a component of his earlier text *Theology for a Scientific Age* (See A. Peacocke, 1993, 17).

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



lead to ‘public truth about the relation of nature, humanity and God’.<sup>596</sup> And so an obvious question is forced by the strength of the claims promulgated by an IBE strategist like Peacocke: how can an inference based explanation pursued through a naturalist epistemology be reconciled with the notion of Transcendence given the foregoing presentation of the ambiguity of the natural world and the somewhat apophatic cast to much traditional philosophical theology?<sup>597</sup> If Transcendence is *sui generis* and utterly beyond a conventional grasp as outlined in Chapter One, and in theological language, ‘God’ is axiomatically understood to be beyond utterance,<sup>598</sup> and therefore formally unnameable,<sup>599</sup> how can these apparently insurmountable theoretical constraints be compellingly breached by inference?

Wilko van Holten similarly questions the use of IBE in relation to theism.<sup>600</sup> Among the qualifications he raises is the observation that belief is not normally the result of a conjectural disposition based on a weighing of the evidences, as Peacocke seems to imply. Faith invariably is *prior to* evidential conviction founded on the natural world, the argument Lash and Moore, to name two, are at pains to point out, and thus the inference to the best explanation only actually makes fundamental sense from this ‘faith’ perspective. It is, therefore, arguably somewhat misleading to suppose that one can “happen upon” the fact that inference based explanations are theistically probable.<sup>601</sup> Hence the relevance of Nicholas Rescher’s critical remarks:

The salient problem can be put in a nutshell. The theory of “inference to the best explanation” is predicated on the idea that generally or frequently there indeed is such a thing as “the best explanation.” And this is surely not the case because generic optimality

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<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>597</sup> For one possible illustration, observe the remark of Professor Hodges: ‘It is not always realised what a strong streak of agnosticism the traditional philosophical theology bears within itself’ (See D. Jenkins, 1987, 10).

<sup>598</sup> D. Jenkins, *Still Living with Questions*, (London: SCM, 1990), 3.

<sup>599</sup> Typically, for example, the citation of Lao Tse in J. Pieper’s discussion of all the things Aquinas left *unsaid* is illustrative: “The name which can be pronounced is not the Eternal Name” (See J. Pieper, 1999, 43).

<sup>600</sup> W. van Holten, ‘Theism and Inference to the Best Explanation’, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, <http://www.arstdisputandi.org>, (27/11/05). *Arts Disputandi* is hosted by The University of Utrecht

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.* Inference based theory is understood to reflect the particular interests of the observer (See P. Lipton, 1991, 68).

evades us here. One explanation may well be better than the other in this or that respect, but there will not, in general, be one that is the absolute best in every relevant respect.<sup>602</sup>

Nevertheless, in his Prologue: *Genesis for the "third" millennium*, Peacocke conceptualises the account of creation from the perspective of 21<sup>st</sup> century science. There are fields of vibrating energy, vibrating fundamental particles, clouds of gas and the swirling whirlpools of matter that yield a billion galaxies,<sup>603</sup> each and all poetically contextualising the inferences to theism that will follow (and notwithstanding the fact that the Book of Genesis is a protological account in only an abstract way).<sup>604</sup> In these senses to try and ally Genesis to the epic of evolution and an inference based epistemology is arguably a form of "explanationism". It quite usefully contextualises the tendency of an inference based strategy to artificially unify disparate fields of experience and explanation. A tendency well observed by Williams when he critically observes 'a way of talking about God that simply projects on to him what we cannot achieve – a systematic vision of the world as a necessarily inter-related whole. Trust in such a God is merely deferred confidence in the possibility of exhaustive explanation and justification'.<sup>605</sup> It is

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<sup>602</sup> N. Rescher, *Philosophical Reasoning: A Study in the Methodology of Philosophizing*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 137. As Lipton also points out, inference to the best explanation does not offer a 'proof' (See P. Lipton, 1991, 6).

<sup>603</sup> A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*, 1-2.

<sup>604</sup> To clarify the point for the reader, according to Peacocke, the 'background assumptions of religious belief...[have] been entirely replaced in the last 150 years by this new epic of evolution' (See A. Peacocke, 2001, 15). But, as the biblical scholar C. Westermann comments in describing the authorial intentions of Genesis, it is inappropriate to ask if the 'description of creation has anything to do with *creatio ex nihilo*. This is a complete distortion of the intention... [the 'author' of Genesis] wants to guard with reverence the mystery of creation, not to explain it' (See C. Westermann, 1994, 174). Further to that, talk about 'creator and creation is everywhere colored by a reverent concern to guard the inaccessible mystery of creation from the human attempt to describe it' (p. 173). Alternatively R. Williams argues: "'creation' simply points you to existing reality in relation to a creator. It does not indicate some enormous event which would explain everything that came later; as Aquinas realized, the doctrine is equally compatible with thinking the universe had an identifiable beginning and thinking it exists eternally' (See R. Williams, 2000, 68). Further still L. Dupré comments that the idea of a 'first cause' was hardly central to understanding of God's relation to the world formulated in the *notion of creation*: 'never before the modern age did Christians consider a notion of extrinsic causality adequate to express the intimate, permanent presence of God to his creation' (See L. Dupré, cited in J. M. Byrne, 2001, 26). In terms of the modern biblical discipline of 'reception history' therefore, the adoption of Genesis by a theistically minded scientist like Peacocke appears to represent a highly debatable and perhaps 'syncretic' use of the text.

<sup>605</sup> R. Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 155.

therefore of telling note that IBE based strategies are ‘simulacra *just because* they do not describe. Thus they belong far to the unificationist end of the explanatory continuum’.<sup>606</sup>

Indeed, the flat implication of inference based explanation is that the case for theism is clearly not self evident to the scientific investigation of the world. If it were then the act of inference would be common, and all thoughtful investigators of the natural world would be theists, which they are not. An inference claims that ‘x’ means ‘y’ when ‘y’ is definitively not given as a routinely accessible feature of ‘x’. It seems that at best theism can only be inferred because God is not a regular fact of the world. And hence Alvin Goldman’s general critique that:

an inference to the best explanation defeats the sceptic only if we can defend the principle that underlies such inference against sceptical challenge. We must be able to show that what appears to us to be a best explanation is likely to be true. In general, the most difficult part of any anti-sceptical epistemology will be to defend the fundamental principles of reasoning or the basic sources through which we seek knowledge.<sup>607</sup>

The decision for Transcendence and God must therefore have its origin on other grounds than those on which the natural scientist stands. If the inference to the best explanation possessed explanatory potency then world-data would be scrutinised by the scientific community who would then, as a matter of integrity, abandon their world-view and worship the creator God, but they do not. Indeed, it has been noted that IBE as a procedure is in fact most doubtful when deployed in support of ‘*theoretical*’ entities – that is, about entities that are unobservable in principle. The basic concern seems to be that theory is underdetermined by evidence: if you can formulate one theory about unobservables to account for a body of evidence, you can formulate indefinitely many others...How, though, are we ever to verify that this choice is in fact the correct one? The candidate theories agree in the observations they predict, so no evidence we can collect

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<sup>606</sup> G. J. Cooper, *The Science of the Struggle for Existence: On the Foundations of Ecology*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 264.

<sup>607</sup> A. Goldman, ‘Epistemology,’ in J. Shand, ed., *Fundamentals of Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 28. As P. R. Thagard also notes, ‘The major weakness of this claim is the lack of specification of how we determine what hypothesis or theory is the best explanation’ (See P. R. Thagard, ‘The Best Explanation: Criteria for Theory Choice’, in P. Lipton, ed., 1995, 173).

will settle the matter'.<sup>608</sup> For further illustration, Dembski, for instance, argues that 'the level of complexity needed to produce intelligent life *could* only have been created by an intelligent agent, where the "could" has the force of mathematical necessity'.<sup>609</sup> But it is equally possible to counter with the somewhat obvious point that it 'is only the fact that we are ourselves part of one of the possible options that singles it out for us as uniquely improbable and therefore miraculous'.<sup>610</sup> And hence to return to Rescher's question:

What really follows from "The proposition *p* forms part of our currently best-available explanation of the fact *f*"? Certainly not that *p* is actually true.<sup>611</sup>

Despite these observations it is obviously 'inconceivable that the Christian theologian would finally declare the natural world to lie outside the purview'<sup>612</sup> of philosophical and theological thought. But against the exigencies of IBE discourse has been appended one essential qualification in varying forms: if divine incomprehensibility is an intrinsically correct element of the understanding of Transcendence, indeed, the "essence" of God,<sup>613</sup> then the claims surrounding general knowledge routinely available to sound investigations that apparently disclose the significance of Transcendence are jarring, both intellectually and existentially. A good illustration of the tenor of the polemic can be found in S. Davis' conclusion of his assessment of the various 'theistic proofs', another attempt to answer rationally the deepest questions of human existence, with these words: 'the reason I am a theist has almost nothing to do with theistic proofs. It has a great deal to do with experiences I have had that I interpret as the presence of God'.<sup>614</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>608</sup> J. Vogel, Entry for 'Inference to the best explanation', in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, (London: Routledge, 1998), 768.

<sup>609</sup> P. Clayton, 'Theology and the Physical Sciences', 348.

<sup>610</sup> J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 86.

<sup>611</sup> N. Rescher, *Philosophical Reasoning*, 133. P. Lipton expresses this well, 'The role of subjunctive reasoning is partially captured by the familiar observation about the 'priority of theory over data'. Induction does not, in general, work by first gathering all the relevant data and only then considering the hypotheses to which they apply, since we often need to entertain a hypothesis first in order to determine what evidence is relevant to it' (See P. Lipton, 1991, 67).

<sup>612</sup> P. Clayton, 'Theology and the Physical Sciences', 342.

<sup>613</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 222.

<sup>614</sup> S. T. Davis, *God, Reason and Theistic Proofs*, (Edinburgh: EUP, 1997), 193. It should be noted that Peacocke is adamant that IBE does not offer a *proof*. Nevertheless, the criticism that God is 'accessible' to a given epistemological strategy, without the adequate concession of the involvement of personal, heavily

public knowledge is a peculiar requirement to insist on as guarantor of the future of philosophical theology as intellectually credible. Were the existence of God to be an instance of public, common knowledge, then human freedom to act and explore would be immeasurably deficient.<sup>615</sup> Such a 'god' would not be Transcendence, but an adjunct to a particular epistemological strategy.

Therefore, to elevate scientific disciplines as the 'hope of theology' as Peacocke does is to give scientific cerebration a 'supernatural cast' that contradicts naturalism which can exclude such concerns.<sup>616</sup> Human cerebration does not, despite the impulse to know and to describe, have a kind of autonomous control and conception of the final unity of existence and it must equally be clear from the forgoing argument that there is no kind of 'proof' that would take one from 'the harmonies of creation' to a transcendent deity.<sup>617</sup> The overriding sense of the elements of modern theism touched upon in an inference based context here verge on egotism, they envision humans as 'the explaining centres of a world whose centre of explanation we so anxiously seek'.<sup>618</sup> Seeking to infer 'what is there' from purely natural reality is a bad way of doing science- there are preferable epistemological modalities that can help settle the question, and it is a bad way of treating that question philosophically- it necessarily neglects the intricacies of subjectivity understood by the present writer to be central to the question of Transcendence. What this amounts to is that, as Jaspers argues, Transcendence cannot possibly be decisively approached apart from some form of existential commitment.<sup>619</sup>

Peacocke declares that he is indebted to Drees in proposing a revised theology and developing an argument for the appropriateness of inference based explanation. Curiously Drees is an acknowledged atheist who does not believe that a unity between science and theology will be established: 'I do not believe that attempts to formulate

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existential 'epistemologies' and patterns of informal reasoning, in other words, non-objective means of arriving at theistically compelled descriptions of the life process, remains.

<sup>615</sup> R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 244.

<sup>616</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, 127.

<sup>617</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 231.

<sup>618</sup> N. Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 225.

<sup>619</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 70.

theological views in continuity with scientific insights will succeed'.<sup>620</sup> But perhaps a telling citation in Drees' exploration throughout *Religion, Science and Naturalism* will suffice. Inference 'cannot substitute for experience, and the most compelling witness to a personal God must itself be personal'.<sup>621</sup> Indeed, the very attempt to infer significance might actually represent 'anti-existentialist craving for objective certainty'<sup>622</sup> that goes against the very nature of the question. As Jaspers argues, 'I must not define transcendence by any predicate, must not objectify it in any idea, must not conceive of it by any inference'.<sup>623</sup> It is time to consider the experiential-qualitative depths, an existential approach to a question at the limits of knowledge. And therefore, necessarily, a subjective dimension to realising the Transcendent basis that unifies objective existence, if it can be meaningfully encountered at all.

## 2. COGNITIVE AESTHETICS IN SCIENCE

If Transcendence or God is simply not an object, 'a thing beyond the world to be found, picked up and considered with conceptual tweezers',<sup>624</sup> then Transcendence cannot be known within the conventions described in the Introduction, in which subjects relate to objects. The possible depth-phenomenon of Transcendence present an existential predicament variously described with the notion of 'cognitive foundering' in the previous Chapter. And in the previous section, it was suggested that Transcendence simply cannot be established by simply inferring its depth and significance as a condition of objective appearances,<sup>625</sup> at least arguably not with any epistemological depth or satisfaction. Why, summarily, asks Lipton, would 'this' particular hypothesis about existence be deemed satisfactory?<sup>626</sup> IBE, it was suggested, is, in its own terms, an open-ended and inconclusive strategy that perhaps can be employed to suit a preoccupation of the person employing it.

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<sup>620</sup> W. B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism*, 148.

<sup>621</sup> M. J. Buckley, cited in W. B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism*, 164.

<sup>622</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 20.

<sup>623</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 35.

<sup>624</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, 86.

<sup>625</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 39.

<sup>626</sup> P. Lipton, 'Inference to the Best Explanation', in W. H. Newton-Smith, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 191.

How, then is Transcendence to be conceived?<sup>627</sup> Something more is required, and it was suggested this ‘more’ that will justify a claim about Transcendence must be *experiential*. Indeed it might be clear to the reader by now that for Jaspers the task of relating to Transcendence is not a matter of objective discernment. Indeed in summary of his basic argument he comments that such existential certitude is ‘lost to me the moment I rescind the leap and slide back into immanence’.<sup>628</sup> Therefore at the limits of a rounded object-knowledge the person may shift the stance of their subjectivity and become an ‘intense listener in a type of silent contemplation of the language of Being itself’.<sup>629</sup> The depths of human experience as it is recorded, and briefly presented in the Introduction: World Orientation (ii): Existential Depth, lends credence to Jaspers’ view that ciphers might speak this hidden depth, and then, it is claimed, the ciphers will unveil luminosity,<sup>630</sup> an existential ‘brightening of the gloom’.<sup>631</sup>

This ‘brightening’, it was suggested, is supremely evident in the graduation of scientific into, quite often, theistic discourse. And so if trying to infer a transcendent significance to the question ‘what is there’ is a questionable epistemology, does cipher theory offer a genuine and plausible alternative? And are ciphers actually evident in scientific research? To answer this question the reader might keep recalling to mind Jaspers’ view that there are three levels of transcending, and that the central form of interest to the thesis argument is ‘the apparent transition from the world of objects initially appearing in answer to the question ‘what is there’, towards an experience of *Being itself* from which all object appearance ‘issues’ (p. 89). It ought also now to be clear that for Jaspers the

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<sup>627</sup> A useful note of illustration may help the reader. There are in philosophical theology various proofs of God’s existence, classically in Aquinas’ Five Ways. These are essentially arguments from the observable contingency of the world which posits a logical dependency on the necessarily un contingent, i.e. on God. But as the existentialist J. Macquarrie suggests, it is arguable that ‘the person offering the proof has already been themselves convinced of God’s reality on grounds quite other than those mentioned in the proof’ (See G. Morley, 2003, 100). Or as Glenn Hughes suggests, the ‘proof’ offered is the fruit of *existential conviction*, not vice versa. Such arguments are a *consequence of* not a *means for* the discovery of Transcendence (See G. Hughes, 2003, 22). Arguably only a qualitative experience will lend conviction to the appropriateness of any given theory. This is precisely the point the present discussion seeks to address by examining the possibility of ciphers in scientific experience, theory and discourse.

<sup>628</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, 25.

<sup>629</sup> B. F. O’Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 24.

<sup>630</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 185.

<sup>631</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 81.

human predicament experiences ‘an insufficiency of the possibilities of being as they reach us in the subject-object division.’<sup>632</sup>

But Jaspers is continually suggesting that there can be something special, beyond empirical knowledge, about the human existential relationship to objective realities in the world. His theory proposes that something ultimate can be intuited within the mundane as it shifts into a code-entity for Transcendence, and so is paradoxically understood to have an empirical basis,<sup>633</sup> present only, as he says, in ‘flatly historic concreteness’.<sup>634</sup> In essence, Jaspers’ notion of the Encompassing considered in Chapter One is the persistent intention to consider the insufficiency of the particular in relation to the ultimate horizons that are *constitutive of* particularised existence. Hence the argument that the reality of transcendence appears only in the language of objectivity, whilst not existing as an empirical object.<sup>635</sup> Midgley provides an important insight in support of Jaspers’ contention:

the natural sciences are wholly dedicated to talking about objects. That is their job. People like Galileo laid down clear conventions at the dawn of modern science to exclude everything subjective from those sciences. They cannot, therefore, provide a language for discussing the relations between subjects and objects.<sup>636</sup>

Jaspers’ is therefore a unique way of describing the relations between subjects and objects. Before discussing the apparent shift that takes place between the particular and the universal in scientific practice, an altogether different mode of experience will help clarify the polemic for the reader. The *artistic relation* of subjects and objects with an apparent encompassing fabric of value will perhaps help the reader understand the sense in which a similar transition is arguably possible in the graduation from scientific into theological discourse.

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<sup>632</sup> G. Knauss, ‘The Concept of the ‘Encompassing’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 148.

<sup>633</sup> B. F. O’Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

<sup>634</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 11.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>636</sup> M. Midgley, *Science and Poetry*, 9.



All artistic acts, commented Lonergan with typical precision and clarity, are an 'expression of the human subject outside the limits of adequate intellectual formulation or appraisal'.<sup>637</sup> As well as providing an avenue of emotional exploration,<sup>638</sup> the artistry of painting or the sculpting of human experience explore the possibility of being 'liberated into communion with transcendent freedom'.<sup>639</sup> Art, then, is a 'spontaneous, self-justifying joy',<sup>640</sup> which, Lonergan goes on to note, liberates human intelligence from 'the wearying constraints of mathematical proofs, scientific verifications, and commonsense factualness. For the validation of the artistic idea is the artistic deed'.<sup>641</sup> For Jaspers art brings a unique 'self-submergence',<sup>642</sup> within the calm realities of seeing and feeling deeply, in which art itself serves an existential function. The alliance of this existentiality to possible Transcendence realised artistically is expressed well by another author also cited earlier, Bhaskar, who observed that 'there is a moment of transcendence, characteristic of creation *ex nihilo* in science, artistic inspiration and transformative practices generally'.<sup>643</sup>

The argument is simple. The genuine artistic act participates in a depth of Being perhaps permanently veiled to other forms of human representation and expression. Common to art, observes Jaspers, is the presence of intrinsic being,<sup>644</sup> this elusive sense that there is more to life than can be easily described with which the thesis is grappling. Indeed, as Searle notes, 'impressionist painters are often said to have focused their attention on the *experiences* they had of objects rather than on the objects themselves when they painted'.<sup>645</sup> Here is a somewhat unusual relation between subjects and objects. Thyssen clarifies a recurrent theme across varied interpreters:

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<sup>637</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 110.

<sup>638</sup> R. Ellis, 'The Dance Form of the Eye: What Cognitive Science Can Learn From Art', *JCS*, 6, No. 6-7, 1999, 161-75.

<sup>639</sup> C. Ernst, *Multiple Echo*, 238.

<sup>640</sup> M. D. Morelli & E. A. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader*, 109.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>642</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 331.

<sup>643</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 147.

<sup>644</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 333.

<sup>645</sup> J. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 73. My emphasis.

If empirical consciousness and its world are, so to speak, the surface of the one Transcendence, then it is truly omnipresent. Jaspers holds accordingly that this presence of Transcendence in different entities can be experienced as their background. Psychologically speaking, what Jaspers has in mind are experiences like sensing the sublimity of the sea through its immensity or, e.g., the fact that in looking at a landscape by Van Gogh we do not only pass from the mere colour and formal arrangement to a realization of beauty values, but that these seem to express something deeper and impalpable.<sup>646</sup>

So it is that the ‘play of all our cognitive faculties in the intuition of the beautiful’<sup>647</sup> unlocks the depth dimensions of Transcendence and brings to light an experience beyond any form of objective statement. It is an explanation in close parallel to the perceptive analysis of Iris Murdoch:

Good art, thought of as symbolic force rather than statement provides a stirring image of pure, transcendent value, a steadily visible enduring higher good, and perhaps provides for many people, in an unreligious age without prayer or sacraments, their clearest experience of something grasped as separate and precious and beneficial and held quietly, and unpossessively in the attention.<sup>648</sup>

Note the similarity here with a theory of ciphers which likewise will not permit a grasping or spectator attitude in relation to the truth of these depths. In these terms a primary function of artistry is to convey a sense of the subliminal, of the depths beyond the refractory automatisms with which the person tackles the physical structures of existence. Or as the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875-1961) put it, if it is permissible to momentarily broaden the support for what is a single and quite basic contention so as to clarify the polemic from several standpoints, the ‘special significance of a true work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator’.<sup>649</sup> Or further still, as Penrose argues

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<sup>646</sup> J. Thyssen, ‘The Concept of ‘Foundering’ in Jaspers’ Philosophy’, 307.

<sup>647</sup> K. Jaspers cited in A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 86.

<sup>648</sup> I. Murdoch, cited in A. O’Hear, *Beyond Evolution*, 192.

<sup>649</sup> Cited in W. J. Brenneman Jr. *et al.*, *The Seeing Eye*, 92.

and whose thought is simply critical to the following argument, exceptional works of art 'are indeed 'closer to God' than are the lesser ones. It is a feeling not uncommon amongst artists, that in their greatest works they are revealing eternal truths which have some kind of prior ethical existence'.<sup>650</sup> This small number of illustrations is intended to convey the experience in which particular instances of practising with artistic forms appear to be straining within the conditions of the particular towards something universal and precious. In essence the collective force of these diverse citations pursue a single end, the claim that a Transcendent depth confronts the interpreter, that the origin of such depths that can be experienced within the limits of a finite human constitution can be traced to an inexpressible source and ground of all existence. If words were capable of expressing the experience there would be no need for artistic interpretation! O'Hear fruitfully summarises the force of the argument:

One possible interpretation of the objectivity of aesthetic value would be to see it in terms of a background of value, such as Iris Murdoch postulates, of standards to which our judgements ought to conform. The hard idea of truth against which we compare our judgements of Homer, Beethoven, Turner, and the rest would be a metaphysical fabric of value, something in or behind the empirical universe, and which our own aesthetic creations and perceptions occasionally and fleetingly reveal.<sup>651</sup>

It is the contention of the present section of the thesis that this 'metaphysical fabric of value' is supremely evident in the experience of science, that there is often as Bhaskar put it above 'a moment of transcendence' in the practice of science. Or in Jaspers' words wherever 'science penetrates, new intelligibles appear, created by wonder and wonder creating'.<sup>652</sup> This sense of speculative wonder confronted in the question 'what is there' is a recurrent and decisive motivation within the history of science.<sup>653</sup> It is a point of commonality between the philosopher, theologian and scientist.<sup>654</sup> As Jürgen Moltmann recently noted in the 'science and religion' context one particular root of perception is

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<sup>650</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind*, 127.

<sup>651</sup> A. O'Hear, *Beyond Evolution*, 192.

<sup>652</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 10.

<sup>653</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 87.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

‘embedded’ in astonishment.<sup>655</sup> And clearly wonder and astonishment are mental and emotional reactions to and reverberations within a transcendent sense of wholeness. Illustratively, Steven Weinberg, a physicist, comments of the intrinsic beauty ‘that we are finding in the rules that govern matter that mirrors something that is built into the logical structure of the universe at a very deep level’.<sup>656</sup> Suffice to say, the appeal and inspiration of beauty is common to the sciences,<sup>657</sup> and possesses an aesthetic parallel in art. But in citing the centrality of the perception of beauty to scientific method, an alternative epistemology to the conventional cerebrations that delineate, codify and verify subjects and objects is clearly being envisioned.

As Barth thought, ‘it is a mistake to suppose the ethos of ‘enlightenment’ to be rationalist, it was not ‘pure reason’ that marked the temper of the eighteenth century, but the *dissociation* of reason from imagination, of head from heart, of inference from imagination’.<sup>658</sup> Indeed as Lash continues one ‘of the structuring myths of modern secularism is that public facts are cool and neutral, calculable, mathematical, and that the only place for poems and stories is the private hearth’.<sup>659</sup> It is a sentiment that fits well with Jaspers’ pluriform view of truth and his various arguments already presented that scientific cerebration is not unconditionally the sole mode of knowledge.<sup>660</sup> But it is precisely the presence within ‘scientific cerebration’ of a modality of interpretation that suggests the presence and function of ciphers, and thereby falsifies the sense in which science is methodologically, without remainder, a matter of ratiocination, that is of particular interest. Confronted with the sheer abundance and plurality of existence, Penrose has argued that such ‘non-algorithmic selection ought to have a role within the physical world of very considerable importance’.<sup>661</sup> It means to say that there is a way of thinking and experiencing that is not always tied to explicit rationality.

<sup>655</sup> J. Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, (London: SCM, 2003), 141.

<sup>656</sup> S. Weinberg, cited in D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, 249.

<sup>657</sup> A. E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 76.

<sup>658</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of Religion*, 175. The reader might like to note in passing, Barth’s own resistance to pursuing the question of God through naturalistic arguments, i.e. in arguing for theism on the basis of natural reality.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>660</sup> J. Collins, ‘Jaspers on Science and Philosophy’, 122.

<sup>661</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, 557.

Even in the presence of large data-sets culled from hard won experimental science, in which all relevant data for judgement is present, this 'process of formulating the appropriate judgment, by extracting what is needed from the morass of data, may be something for which no clear algorithmic process exists – or even where there is one, it may not be a practical one'.<sup>662</sup> Here is an intriguing and unmissable parallel with the concept of a cipher. Bhaskar also articulates, quite vividly, the concept of 'spontaneous right cognition'.<sup>663</sup> Both, it can be argued, are striking examples of the reality of ciphers manifesting Transcendence in which the imaginative play of faculties in a transcendent freedom enter into the deep structure of existence in an unstructured way.

It may be that 'correct wondering' functions as a cipher in which the transcendent ground-state is already experientially engaged and ordering the subsequent formulations. Bhaskar talks about Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), immersed in a field of deeply enmeshed experience, as co-existing virtually inseparably from the 'ground-state of study', in which case the mind is not so much 'extended into' as virtually ontologically constituted by wider Being. Hence the earlier argument that the 'winning steps' of cognitive appropriation are merely the 'hard prepared ground' for a deeper experience.<sup>664</sup> At these exceptionally high levels of cerebration, the thought processes are not serial- the piecemeal apprehension of static objects, but are achieved in an aesthetically conceived sense of co-valence between the subject and various more or less objective wholes. It is a relation that seems to reveal this additional Transcendent element. Here comments Bhaskar, is a 'union between something already enfolded within the discovering agent, brought up to consciousness by a moment of Platonic anamnesis or recall, with the alethic self-revelation of the being known, existing outside him'.<sup>665</sup> If words of poetic license are permissible they may aid the reader:

...there are the heights  
too, where the intellect

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<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>663</sup> R. Bhaskar, *Reflections on Meta Reality: Transcendence, Emancipation and Everyday Life*, (London: Sage, 2002), 99.

<sup>664</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 36.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

meets with God in its own  
weather.<sup>666</sup>

It appears that the 'propellant' within the theory formation is, if ambiguously, an aesthetic appreciation, and apparently indeterminable sense for the beauty of physical and theoretical existence. It is as though scientific analysis was 'already' *attended* by an experience that transcended the object under scrutiny. In these terms of reference the experience of physicist Frank Close is noteworthy. He commented that his most profound moment within research was 'the first time an experiment confirmed my theory and I felt humbled by having "caught Nature at it"'. The fact that Nature 'knew' about *his* equations was 'an eerie and mystical experience'.<sup>667</sup> Alternatively we can see the 'excitement at the disclosure of hidden beauty'<sup>668</sup> in Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) or Johannes Kepler (1571-1630). Further to that, in support of Bhaskar's assertion, 'aesthetic considerations and their grounding in a primitive theism were not embellishments of Newton's science'.<sup>669</sup> Or, continuing the theme, Hendrik Lorentz (1853-1928), commented on Einstein's theory of general relativity as having 'the very highest degree of aesthetic merit: every lover of the beautiful must wish it to be true'.<sup>670</sup> Or further still, in an expansive possible literature, is the experience of a British chemist:

God for Davy was the guarantor of a simple, harmonious and ultimately intelligible world, making science a reasonable activity, as it would not be if the world were governed by pure chance.<sup>671</sup>

Hence the palpably obvious fact, whether epistemologically warranted or not, and this is of course *the* critical question, that the 'graduation of aesthetic into theistic discourse has been a recurrent theme with many variations'.<sup>672</sup> Be that variation the pantheism of Einstein, or in Eugene Wigner (1902-1995) who observed that the 'miracle of the

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<sup>666</sup> R. S. Thomas, *No Truce with the Furies*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1996), 65. Fragment of 'Navigation'.

<sup>667</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 227.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>670</sup> A. E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, 77.

<sup>671</sup> D. M. Knight, Davy's biographer, cited in J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 224.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

appropriateness of the language of mathematics for the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift that we neither understand nor deserve'.<sup>673</sup> Or even in Heisenberg who:

spoke of a spirit of humility in which one had to accept the gift of 'an incredible degree of simplicity' in the mathematical abstractions of physical theory. These beautiful interrelationships could not be invented: 'they have been there since the creation of the world'. His wife recorded that he had once said to her: 'I was lucky enough to look over the good Lord's shoulder while He was at work'.<sup>674</sup>

Brooke and Cantor are apposite, then, to suggest that whether 'the scientists in question are Faraday, Darwin or Einstein, aesthetic motives in the quest for a unified theory were the driving force and not an excrescence'.<sup>675</sup> Here are the transcendental identifications, in Bhaskar's terminology, instances of the 'evanescence' central to Jaspers in which the strictly determinable character of objects collapses and the depth dimensions of existence realised.<sup>676</sup> While specific instances of object-existence are considered, 'the entire theory might suddenly shift and become a code entity for the magnificence of divine wisdom'.<sup>677</sup> In Jaspers' scheme of philosophy the above experiences might be elucidated as evidence of the function of ciphers furnishing further impulses within the scientific quest, which perhaps otherwise would not have been disclosed.<sup>678</sup> Penrose for example comments that we 'must 'see' the truth of a mathematical argument to be convinced of its validity',<sup>679</sup> an observation that arguably necessitates a transcendent span of vision or attention. And similarly refers to Paul Dirac (1902-1984) who 'is unabashed in his claim that it was his *keen sense of beauty* that enabled him to divine his equation for the electron...while others had searched in vain.'<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> E. P. Wigner, cited in *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>676</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 20.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>678</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 184.

<sup>679</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind*, 540.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

In all cases an ‘idea would be quickly rejected and forgotten if it did not ‘ring true’’,<sup>681</sup> suggesting a ‘direct route to truth’!<sup>682</sup> In these instances, the ‘perception of beauty is not an automatic response to a generalizable stimulus’<sup>683</sup> but is predicated on an aesthetic appreciation for the ‘enormously valuable’<sup>684</sup> experience of plurality, *as* beautiful. It is undeniable that the beautiful ‘directs, shapes, and explains’.<sup>685</sup> As Brooke and Cantor observe, here in discussing Kepler:

A beautiful theory may be discarded as fantasy, only to be replaced by another in which an unexpected beauty gleams. With what reluctance did Kepler abandon circular motion for the planets. To lose the music of the spheres was an intolerable deprivation. Playing with oval curves for the planetary orbits Kepler compared them to a cart-load of ‘dung’. And yet he could not believe that nature was so foul. In due course he was rewarded with the elegance of the ellipse – new music to his ears and a new music of the spheres.<sup>686</sup>

Arguably therefore a cipher-like wonder is not only *prior to* rational reflection,<sup>687</sup> it extends beyond what ratiocination is able to grasp. Recall the earlier insistence that ‘factual cognition’ provides only particular instances of Being<sup>688</sup> So be it Steven Weinberg’s notion of beauty in physical theory akin to that in a Greek tragedy,<sup>689</sup> aesthetic sensibility in mathematics which enables the mathematician to “‘see’ the truth”<sup>690</sup> of an argument, or the ‘energetic stillness of attention, which is the hallmark of objectivity’,<sup>691</sup> at that moment in which the ‘determinate character’ of a theory is

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<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, 554.

<sup>683</sup> A. O’Hear, *Beyond Evolution*, 189.

<sup>684</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, 544.

<sup>685</sup> A. O’Hear, *Beyond Evolution*, 187.

<sup>686</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 209. The reader might like to see the list of possible candidates expanded. Brooke and Cantor also cite N. Jardine’s argument that aesthetic appeal and response is deeply embedded in science (p. 210), M. Polanyi’s view of the intimacy of beauty to truth (p. 212), T. Brahe’s comments about proportion in matters of astronomy ‘because God, the author of the universe, loves appropriate order, not confusion and disorder’ (p. 213), and in related matters Copernicus’ aim to ‘reveal the order and symmetry of God’s Creation’ (p. 214), or even Darwin’s description of an excited state of mind held in relation to ‘grand scene’ as ‘intimately connected with a belief in God’ (p. 227).

<sup>687</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 88.

<sup>688</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 5.

<sup>689</sup> A. E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, 76.

<sup>690</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, 540.

<sup>691</sup> N. Lash, *The Beginning and the End of ‘Religion’*, 85.



subordinated to a sense of the whole,<sup>692</sup> something more than cerebration is present. As Bhaskar stretches to say:

You might say this burst from nowhere is actually the kind of alethic self-revelation of some deeper being that knows it all – or just is the reality he is investigating, or that it is already present, implicit in him, waiting to be explicated in his conscious experience.<sup>693</sup>

These diverse citations upon a single theme arguably suggest the non-algorithmic character of human knowing, lending support to the argument of Penrose that there is ‘something essential in human understanding that is not possible to simulate by any computational means’.<sup>694</sup> In which case there appears, time again, to be an ‘unconscious putting-up-process’ in which the depths of subjects relating to objects spontaneously manifests the appropriateness of ‘this particular theory’, and a conscious ‘shooting-down’<sup>695</sup> or judgement of the theory’s adequacy. Indeed, as Penrose points out, ‘algorithms, in themselves, *never* ascertain truth!’<sup>696</sup> And it is only retrospectively that an algorithm is used to check the theory.<sup>697</sup> If it is this apparent ‘ability to divine (or ‘intuit’) truth from falsity (and beauty from ugliness!) in appropriate circumstances, that is the hallmark of consciousness’,<sup>698</sup> then there can be no ‘good reason to exclude a category of ‘methodological aestheticism’’,<sup>699</sup> from science, which is clearly spontaneously operative in the exigencies of high-level thought.<sup>700</sup>

Here as Jaspers would say, there is a ‘sensing of the whole of a present reality in its situations’.<sup>701</sup> Necessarily therefore, once again, the question of Transcendence cannot be

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<sup>692</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 21.

<sup>693</sup> R. Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation*, 35.

<sup>694</sup> R. Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind: A Search for the Missing Science of Consciousness*, (London: Vintage, 1995), 201.

<sup>695</sup> R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind*, 546.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>699</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 230.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>701</sup> Cited in B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 30.

the object of third-party disclosure, it is 'not to be proved, but to be testified to'.<sup>702</sup> The only 'spanner in the works' of theory building along lines drawn from an aesthetic appreciation of existence relayed in the profundities of high-level engagement with the natural order, is the tendency to reject the actual experience of objects as they seem to relay the interacting wholes from which they emanate and which carry such evident illumination. In Jaspers' elegant words, the only problem is when 'historical and psychological collectors and tabulators neutralize the ciphers into noncommittal random data'.<sup>703</sup> But of course, as long as struggle, personal involvement, creative imagination and aesthetic experience,<sup>704</sup> are central to science and prescind from engagement with the limited whole of the world, and that contact with the various 'absolutes' experienced in cipher-script give consciousness its elemental vigour,<sup>705</sup> there is little concrete hope of banishing the possibility that God 'shines through the reasonableness of his creation'.<sup>706</sup> Hence the relevance of Jaspers' theoretical insistence that:

this moment is not a call for a more determined application of the exigencies of empirical consciousness. The person cannot encounter Being in a more profound way by simply applying himself to empirical experience with deeper commitment. What occurs here is a real awareness of the limits inherent within empirical consciousness itself. This awareness is made possible by the presence of existential consciousness as its transcendental encompassing.<sup>707</sup>

Clearly across these examples there appears to be, as O'Conner continues 'an immediacy between consciousness and reality that transcends the mediating role of the object'.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in J. I. Loewenstein, 'Judaism in Jaspers' Thought', in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 652.

<sup>703</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, 184.

<sup>704</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 212. Brooke's perceptive description of science seems to accord with Jaspers' evaluation of the limits of empiricism where comments that a 'purely empirical existence is indeed like a decline from being to mere knowledge' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 17).

<sup>705</sup> R. Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, 401.

<sup>706</sup> J. Ratzinger, 'In the Beginning...', *A Catholic Understanding of the Creation and Fall*, (London: T&T Clark: 1995), 24.

<sup>707</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 30.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

Hence, whilst preserving the critical limits of the subject-object dichotomy, Jaspers affirms ‘the reality of a Transcendence that clearly surpasses these limits’.<sup>709</sup>

### 3. A SECONDARY CRITIQUE OF CIPHERS

The attentive reader might have noticed a peculiar juxtaposition in the philosophical contours presented by Jaspers. He commented in the Introduction that ‘Everywhere in thought, so to speak, there is a place where something will be directly posited as absolute, because I cannot exist and think without the appearance of an absolute...I can, therefore, neither conceive this absolute being nor give up trying to conceive it’ (fn 165). But later on he is heard to propose that ‘the most devastating threat to truth in the world is the overweening claim to the absolutely true’ (fn 392). What a predicament! The person may neither give up the search for an absolute, but nor can they ever realise their quest! It is an observation that perhaps characterises a worrying element of Jaspers’ thought. It also raises the central criticism of the Secondary Critique, namely a series of objections that will revolve around the *existential media* Jaspers identifies as crucial to an experience of Transcendence. Before that, brief attention will be given to the role of cipher theory as an improvement on IBE discourse, and as a component of the aesthetic dimensions discussed in the previous two sections.

Parallel to the earlier affirmation of cipher theory in the Preliminary Critique, as offering epistemological nuance to the basic philosophic question ‘what is there?’, is the further and related clue provided by Wallraff’s citation of Aristotle, largely in summary of the force of the three earlier affirmations, who comments:

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject matter admits of...It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits...<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>709</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 108.

<sup>710</sup> Aristotle, cited in C. F. Wallraff, *K. Jaspers*, 18-19.

If the definition of Being provided above (p. 56f) is accepted, then it follows that Being and Transcendence cannot be the object of human thought in the conventional sense. To ask cogent clarity of what is a limit-question, it was suggested, would be to commit a category error. Peacocke's IBE based advocacy of public rationality in the spheres of religious discourse is undoubtedly welcome in its attempt not to surrender science to an atheistic premise. But IBE strategies in their own terms cannot settle the question of Transcendence once left with an enduring systematic ambiguity, and offer at best probable statements about the possibility of Transcendence. In so doing inference to the best explanation appears to be an "explanationist" epistemology attempting to account for the unity of the whole of existence. But as such it neglects the unique particulars of human experience and therefore lacks epistemological nuance. It is not existentially compelling.

In its critique of sectarian religion the standards of rationality Peacocke seeks are welcome, but they subvert epistemological subtlety. For Jaspers it would represent the temptation to 'void the freedom of self-being in favour of a known being'.<sup>711</sup> The tenor of the objections to inference based theories raised above is that science has no facility for dealing objectively with these limit situations and to propose that it can is misleading. Or, at least, an inference is a somewhat oblique way of approaching a question of ultimate significance. And in any case, an inference is arguably only compelling for someone who had become convinced of its probability on other, probably experiential-qualitative grounds. And therefore ciphers are an improvement on IBE approaches to questions about Transcendence because (i), they commit an experiential hermeneutic to a possible ontology that cannot be adequately realised without the correct epistemology being brought to bear. 'It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits'.

Now to the problems posed by the reliance of the argument on an aesthetic premise. In the previous section it was suggested that ciphers are clearly evident in the discourse of research scientists as it shifts, apparently quite naturally, from empirical into often

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<sup>711</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 221.

theistic repose. And at first sight, a theory of ciphers apparently fits the reported accounts of scientific practice comparatively well. However, this issue is not as simple as it first appears. The success of the argument that beauty and aesthetic depth have a cipher function in revealing dimensions that cannot be disclosed or made accessible to standards of impartiality and objectivity rests on two difficult philosophical questions. Firstly distinguishing between an inference and an actual experience, for the argument presupposes that the working scientist comes to know something that goes beyond the subjective quality of an inference. And secondly, in realising that an aesthetic argument of this kind presupposes not only external realism but *aesthetic realism*. It presupposes that it is valid to be realist about beauty. Both these objections are weighty and to be treated properly require more space than is permitted to the crucial philosophical steps of the present thesis.<sup>712</sup> Nevertheless, some sound observations can be made.

Indeed, can an aesthetic and experiential dimension assure the person of the presence of Transcendence? That Transcendence can be experienced as the alluring background of objective knowledge is clearly given explicit content by an appeal to the records of scientific endeavour. Arguably then, the language of ciphers helps to account for the graduation of scientific and varied other forms of discourse into loosely recognisable forms of theism. As Penrose notes, 'there are some, such as Newton or Einstein, or Archimedes, Galileo, Maxwell or Dirac – or Darwin, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Picasso, Bach, Mozart, or Plato, or those great minds who could conceive the *Iliad* or *Hamlet* – who seem to have more of this faculty of being able to 'smell' out truth or beauty than is given to the rest of us'.<sup>713</sup> All are variously predicated on a sense of the sublime, of beauty and depth, with often recognisable theological tones.

A cipher theory of Transcendence has been presented to justify at least one possible explanation of how these inspirations, albeit having to deal with them somewhat amorphously in the present thesis, again and again take on a transcendent and theistic reference. But as Brooke and Cantor rightly question in relation to science, though these experiences and conjectures are undoubtedly edifying and humanising, they are not

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<sup>712</sup> Therefore please see the 'Suggested Areas for Future Research' at the end of the thesis.

<sup>713</sup> R. Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, 420.

necessarily true.<sup>714</sup> Indeed this kind of affirmation is evident in numerous discourses of human enquiry and adventure and Brooke and Cantor, as historians, are quick and well equipped to remind the reader that history is ‘littered with beautiful delusions’.<sup>715</sup> The foregoing argument for aesthetic realism conjectures that beauty is a real property of art,<sup>716</sup> but as suggested, it would take time and patience to establish, if indeed it could be, that aesthetic depth is a genuine facet of the universe existing independently of the knowing mind.<sup>717</sup> Therefore the problems posed by aesthetic arguments would require further work to establish and answer. Nevertheless, (ii) given the calibre of the witnesses of aesthetic depth discussed here, and the predication of this depth on, at least initially, precise objective credentials of outstanding rigour, there are defensible grounds for believing cipher-theory does have a contribution to make in explaining the discovery of transcendence throughout scientific research.

Now to some solid objections to Jaspers’ philosophical drama, to the problems it was suggested his understanding of ‘existential media’ advance. Distancing philosophy and perhaps thought generally from an obsession with a ‘fixed knownness’<sup>718</sup> is undoubtedly welcome, particularly where an endlessly variable polyvalent phenomena such as Transcendence is concerned. And that there is no ‘scientifically fruitful concept of the unity of the world as a whole’<sup>719</sup> leads the way to varied a posteriori epistemological approaches appropriate to the ‘entity’ under consideration. The cipher dynamic allows, it was suggested in the Primary Critique, ontology to be reconstituted in existential metaphysics, so as to say that there are depths to life that can only be realised through a

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<sup>714</sup> J. Brooke & G. Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 207-209.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>716</sup> J. Baggini & P. S. Fosl, *The Philosopher’s Toolkit*, 164.

<sup>717</sup> The need to examine the apologetic credentials of an argument built around aesthetic criteria has been conceded. Nevertheless, the reader might observe the essence of Brooke and Cantor’s objections. In the first place, beauty is not necessarily a guarantee of truth, there are examples of beautiful theories that prove meaningless. Secondly, the value of simplicity in a theory can also be regarded as nothing more than a theoretical constraint. These kinds of aesthetic secretions may also be a rhetorical ploy on the part of the scientist to garner an audience for their work. And finally, the notion of an elegant and deliberately planned universe proceeds from a sample of only one, the present existence, so it is not at least obviously true that aesthetic considerations are always and everywhere present and relevant. Brooke and Cantor conclude their assessment of the graduation from aesthetic to theistic discourse upholding Hick’s doctrine of systemic ambiguity (See J. Brooke & G. Cantor, 2000, 228-232).

<sup>718</sup> K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 73.

<sup>719</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 11.

participatory hermeneutic. So much is clear. And so to pose the inner logic of the earlier affirmation of ciphers in slightly different language: has Jaspers rescued experience as a fundamental category in suggesting that what is most important to human life cannot be objectified? The answer is both yes and no, and therefore Jaspers' system of thought invites a critique of 'disobjectification' 'evanescence' and 'transparency' as the primary metaphysics of Being.

It invites a critique because arguably there must be an *implicit ontology* to a doctrine of 'transparency'. If there was no ontological basis to a cipher whatsoever, any given cipher event would surely be unrecognisable. As Jaspers said above, the 'significations which cannot be annulled by equating them with the object signified we call ciphers. They signify, but they do not signify a specific thing. The content is only in the cipher and does not exist outside it' (fn 432). But if the content 'Transcendent Being' does not exist outside the cipher then logically 'Being', at least to a finite human perspective, does not exist outside the cipher. Which again is a curious juxtaposition because Jaspers was heard to comment above that the 'Being that is to encompass all being is transcendent' (fn 269) and, then again, therefore that Being is the 'the last thing we reach through questioning from our situation, is in itself the first. It is not made by us, is not interpretation, and is not an object. Rather it itself brings forth our questioning and permits it no rest' (fn 274). The implicit tension and problem is that Transcendence cannot simply be a 'blank otherness' because if it has no distinguishing features then it cannot be anything other than 'us', anything other than disquieting aestheticism or projection. Jaspers' conception of Transcendence is therefore so a-temporal so as to suppress the alterity of Transcendence to a vanishing point. In these senses the *existential media* that actually shape and inform life generally, apparently possess a durability that Jaspers denies is possible. One has to wonder if he has not succumbed to a Gnostic fall!<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Gnosticism, from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning "revealed knowledge" arose in the second and third centuries, promulgating the notion of a secret knowledge of an utterly transcendent realm quite different to the conceptions of mainstream Christianity of the time. Jaspers' own esoteric machinations possess similar tendencies, so as to render the divine so distant and separate that only a highly unspecific *lingua franca* couched in the language of the inaccessible will ever carry a divine warrant.

Two arguments can be advanced in support of the view that Jaspers is Gnostic about Transcendence. It was noted above (fn 408) that there is a mystical dimension to Jaspers' thought. But is he really a mystic in the conventional sense of the term? If the settled reflections of a profound thinker may be permitted to eloquently clarify at least one sense of the word 'mysticism', then the observation of E. Schillebeeckx may aptly provide the poignant contrast the following analysis intends to convey. There is always this noted tendency with Jaspers for Transcendence to be held unfathomably far apart, but as had been proposed on more than one occasion, genuine mysticism possesses an 'integrating and conciliatory sympathy with all things'.<sup>721</sup> This is expressed well and aptly sums up a diverse literature. A wide range of authors could be seen to encapsulate similar sympathies.

What is it, then, for Jaspers, that resists domestication into the conventions of human knowledge? Obviously, from the argument as a whole: 'Transcendence'. But why is it that Transcendence must remain permanently at the point of vanishing from human experience? As suggested in the Primary Critique, a more developed idea of mediation is required than Jaspers' fraught polarities of Existenz and Transcendence. The central problem with Jaspers' theory of ciphers can be simply stated. The tension implicit in the fact that Transcendence is not an object is continually established as a somewhat dramatic divide between the person and the encompassing transcendent ground. Hence the existential media through which Jaspers argues Transcendence is reconciled are invariably framed in terms of the evanescent, the fleeting, the appearance and disappearance of something impossible to realise and that must by its nature be strange and inevitably separate. Jaspers almost offers a justification for 'not thinking' in advancing a philosophical language dedicated to the a-temporal flashes of the almost content free and decidedly ambiguous ciphers of Transcendence. There is therefore a certain irony to an existential philosophy that locates all genuine significance in moments that escape human temporality and the conventional way humans experience things.

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<sup>721</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *I am a Happy Theologian: Conversations with Francesco Strazzari*, (London: SCM, 1994), 50.



More specifically still, exactly what does this mean? Two contrasts will help clarify the uneasy relationship between Jaspers and what might be called conventional patterns of knowledge. His relationship to first *nature*, and then to *religion* will elucidate the argument. The ‘Christian understanding of creation leads directly to the conclusion that there is a correspondence – the degree of which requires clarification – between the works of God and the being of God’.<sup>722</sup> In which case, the notion of an *analogia entis* ‘leads to the expectation of a fundamental convergence of truth and beauty in the investigation and explanation of the world, precisely on account of the grounding of that world in the nature of God’.<sup>723</sup> Hence Walter Brueggemann’s exegetical comments that the essential unity of ‘creation’ is understood to be ‘aesthetic as well as ethical’.<sup>724</sup> It points to an experiential dynamic which proceeds from the simplest assertion, namely that what is ‘*existentia*’ is dependent on *essentia* of God.<sup>725</sup> Given the affirmation that ‘creation is good’ there can be agreement, with Schillebeeckx’s other summary comments, that modern subjectivity ‘cannot arrive at God by leaving nature aside’,<sup>726</sup> and therefore nature must be held to bear a meaningful relationship to Transcendence.<sup>727</sup> And yet Jaspers’ own neutral assessment of nature led him to assert that ‘the cipher of nature as such ceases to be the real thing when *Existenz* steps forth’.<sup>728</sup> Fritz Kaufmann takes up the criticism:

To declare nature in itself as “essentially foreign and impenetrable to us,” something that becomes my world only through my work, runs counter to an experience of nature which is not restricted to children and so-called primitive people, but is enhanced, above all, by the high cultures of the East.<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, 193.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>724</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 18.

<sup>725</sup> A. E. McGrath, *Reality*, 227.

<sup>726</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *I am a Happy Theologian*, 49.

<sup>727</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, 296.

<sup>728</sup> K. Jaspers, cited in F. Kaufmann, ‘Karl Jaspers and a Philosophy of Communication’, in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 235.

<sup>729</sup> F. Kaufmann, ‘Karl Jaspers and a Philosophy of Communication’, 234-235. Indeed the reader might recall Jaspers’ earlier comment where he referred to a ‘brightening of the gloom’!

Hence the intrinsic problem with the philosophising of Jaspers, in which the world-view is unbalanced, and nature, among other things, dislocated from the common sense in which it forms a core value accessible to ordinary experience, and the potential for transcendent depth. The person is, as it were, in an unhappy set of paradoxes: for nature is *below* communication and Transcendence is ever towering endlessly and elusively *above* it, somewhere.<sup>730</sup> But it is precisely the 'below' of nature which is counterintuitive and directly in contradiction to the Judeo-Christian assertion that 'creation is good', and the perhaps common experience of its sublime content. Kaufmann engagingly cites a poem about the lonely inhabitants of an isolated island in the North Sea: 'there can be no communication between them and the vast space around them', and then cites this line from the Austro-German poet and novelist Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926): "near is but what is inside; far away the rest".<sup>731</sup> Jaspers negative view of contingency in the natural order is clearly in variance with the notion of participating in a 'good' creation. It suggests his uneasiness with a stable intuition of the 'absolutely good'. For example, against the lonely and dismal scene painted by Rilke can be juxtaposed the account of the English writer and art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900):

Although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with, there was a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest; an instinctive awe, mixed with delight; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit. I could only feel this perfectly when I was alone; and then it would often make me shiver from head to foot with the joy and fear of it, when after being some time away from the hills I first got to the shore of a mountain river, where the brown water circled among the pebbles, or when I first saw the swell of distant land against the sunset, or the first low broken wall, covered with mountain moss...If we had to explain even the sense of bodily hunger to a person who had never felt it, we should be hard put to it for words; and the joy in nature seemed to

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<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, 235. Kaufmann rightly footnotes his criticism by observing in other places Jaspers' positive relationship with nature. An example he does not provide might be: 'In the cipher, a nature lover sees the truth of a being that is not to be measured, is not generally valid, but can be embraced along with every reality. The dawn and the puddle in the street...the Mediterranean landscape – all these contain something which mere existence as a scientific research object does not exhaust' (See K. Jaspers, 1971, 153).

me to come of a sort of heart-hunger, satisfied with the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit.<sup>732</sup>

The question of a profoundly therapeutic engagement with nature cannot be overlooked, indeed, in the classical traditions, e.g. that of English poet John Keats (1795-1821), the ‘natural world is a gateway to the realm of the transcendent’.<sup>733</sup> Alternatively, how ‘absolutely central’, remarked the American Trappist monk and religious writer Thomas Merton (1915-1968), ‘is the truth that we are first all *part of nature*, though we are a very special part, that which is conscious of God’.<sup>734</sup> This conjectured relation between the givenness of nature and its rooting in the divine is disclosed in the immense poetic inspiration of nature,<sup>735</sup> be it the wonder of Keats at the arrayed constellations, or a rainbow,<sup>736</sup> or the Lakeland peaks and waters of the nineteenth century. ‘How shall I trace the history, where seek/’, asked William Wordsworth (1770-1850), ‘The origin of what I then have felt?’<sup>737</sup>

Or perhaps, the list is virtually inexhaustible, the Cistercian, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, wrote, surprisingly, in Epistle 106: “You will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters”.<sup>738</sup> The confrontational depths of consciousness<sup>739</sup> encountering phenomena in nature was experientially potent enough for an adroit and highly cerebral existentialist like Merton to stretch the metaphor of nature in referring to the forest as a bride:<sup>740</sup> “It is necessary for me to live here alone without a woman, for the silence of the forest is my bride”. Every

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<sup>732</sup> J. Ruskin, cited in *The Creation Spirit: An Anthology*, (London: DLT, 1990), 19.

<sup>733</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 90.

<sup>734</sup> T. Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1965), 268.

<sup>735</sup> A. E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, 87.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>737</sup> H. M. Margoliouth, *Wordsworth: Selected Poems*, (London: Collins, 1987), 89. Fragment from ‘Early Morning Walks’.

<sup>738</sup> Cited in M. Weiss, ‘Dancing with the Raven: Thomas Merton’s Evolving View of Nature’, in P. F. O’Connell, ed., *The Vision of Thomas Merton*, (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2003), 153.

<sup>739</sup> G. Morley, *John Macquarrie’s Natural Theology*, 108.

<sup>740</sup> R. E. Daggy, *The Journals of Thomas Merton: Dancing in the Waters of Life, Vol.5*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 240.

journal passage reflects nature,<sup>741</sup> and a certain 'ecological balance', a certain 'mental ecology'.<sup>742</sup> 'Out here in the woods', reads another entry, 'I can think of nothing except God and it is not so much that I think of Him either. I am as aware of him as of the sun and the clouds and the blue sky and the thin cedar trees'.<sup>743</sup> The sense that the whole of existence, of which nature is a part, is unified is unmissable. And so:

The first place in which to go looking for the world is not outside us, but in ourselves. We *are* the world. In the deepest ground of our being we remain in metaphysical contact with the whole of that creation in which we are only small parts.<sup>744</sup>

These may appear as trivial or lightweight observations to make, not worthy of a powerfully analytic mind. Perhaps to be chalked up as inconsequential items, probably, in any case, of romantically inspired solipsism, simply a culturally inspired apologetic. But it is also possible to follow the likelihood that there can be sufficient appreciation of a depth in nature to speak of its Transcendence. Against Jaspers' somewhat negative conception of nature as 'out there', like another not insignificant American writer Henry Thoreau (1817-1862), Merton had made a shift from the conceiving of nature at *arm's length*, as it were, to the realisation of nature that possesses a depth that indelibly colours those immersed in it.<sup>745</sup> These insights are finally grounded in the fact that Being is expressed in finite being which appears to contain and carry something of its form. A transcendent ground appears to condition human experience within a somewhat stable encounter with this encompassing depth. When, in covalence with consciousness ('the joy in nature seemed to me to come of a sort of heart-hunger'), Transcendence literally begins to constitute the person ('like something in myself'), then here is the presence of the infinite in the finite. The crucial insight is that (iii), the relation to Transcendence through natural realities poses the intriguing possibility of a relation stabilised into a

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<sup>741</sup> P. Pearson, 'The Geography of a Soul: Thomas Merton's Ongoing Spiritual Autobiographical Quest within the Context of the Literary Genre of Autobiography.' Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, (Heythrop College, University of London, London, England, 1997), 169.

<sup>742</sup> T. Merton, *Day of a Stranger*, (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M Smith, 1981), 33-35.

<sup>743</sup> L. S. Cunningham, ed., *The Journals of Thomas Merton, Vol. 3: A Search for Solitude*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 16.

<sup>744</sup> T. Merton, *Love and Living*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), 120.

<sup>745</sup> M. Weiss, 'Dancing with the Raven: Thomas Merton's Evolving View of Nature', 152.

passive and enduring intuition at odds with Jaspers' taut and overtly existentialist framework.

As suggested, the second objection concerns Jaspers' relation to religion. Ricoeur holds that ciphers *are* Jaspers' religious philosophy,<sup>746</sup> and generally speaking, 'religions' are disbanded as myths that are in subsidiary position to the uncertain and tentative ciphers.<sup>747</sup> Jaspers therefore renounces any sense of religious immediacy,<sup>748</sup> rejecting, for example, 'prayer's' claim to 'hear the divine voice directly',<sup>749</sup> as 'no more than a suspicious fixation'<sup>750</sup> that is inappropriate to philosophy. Jaspers was thus wary of *any* corporeal claims where Transcendence is understood to have taken fixity of form. Transcendence can only be a reality at the very limits of knowing ever realised in tangential and oblique ways. There can be no conclusiveness,<sup>751</sup> for Transcendence must remain 'flatly concealed'.<sup>752</sup> Jaspers' typical admonition was not to 'profane the deity', and subsequently to keep Transcendence 'pure in its concealment, its distance, its strangeness'.<sup>753</sup> Critically, the ever diaphanous and attitudinal<sup>754</sup> ciphers simply 'do not permit interpretation with regard to an 'Other''.<sup>755</sup>

What can be said about this second objection, that ciphers of Transcendence, along with nature, offer no objective sense of consolation and resist the conventional sense of religious immediacy? These are also very real and pertinent criticisms. Jaspers exhibits a tendency to perpetually intend reality without ever actually embracing it.<sup>756</sup> Across Jaspers' philosophical intricacies, then, the demarcation between philosophical faith and

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<sup>746</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 619.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, 628. Ricoeur argues that ciphers take the form of *faith*, because they are 'not an act accessible to abstract cognition' (See P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 621).

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*, 613.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 616.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 617. Alternatively, for Jaspers the 'Thou' of prayer, if thought about as a 'font quickly runs dry' (See K. Jaspers, 1967, 151).

<sup>751</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 121. In Jaspers' philosophical corpus, therefore, words that suggest a durable encounter with Transcendence, like prayer, trust, grace and redemption are absent.

<sup>752</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 60.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>755</sup> Jaspers, cited in A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 125.

<sup>756</sup> B. F. O'Connor, *A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Religion*, 191.

'theological faith' is recognised as somewhat dramatic.<sup>757</sup> Elements that are recognisably Judeo-Christian tend to be 'dissolved in ciphers'.<sup>758</sup> For example, the sacramental systems pursued by the Christian Church would be described by Jaspers negatively, as in effect, 'ontology domesticated as soteriology'.<sup>759</sup> It is hard not to see the endless inconclusive dynamic described by cipher-systems as a wearying place to exist. At first glance, therefore, it is the present conjecture that Jaspers' 'double domicile'<sup>760</sup> philosophy of Existenz and Transcendence, in which connecting relation is the 'evanescent apparition',<sup>761</sup> is at odds with the sense of contemplation developed in certain strands of religious practice as it symbolises and attempts to appropriate transcendent concerns.

The writing on contemplation similarly offered by Merton, for ongoing clarification that perhaps Transcendence is not indeterminably out of human reach, continually bucks the tendencies Jaspers seems intent to uphold. A brief contrast is permitted in the space available. The central problem appears to be that the genuine 'contemplative self', rather than the arguably pseudo-philosophical contemplative self of Jaspers is just in no way evanescent.<sup>762</sup> 'I cannot', argues Jaspers 'remain in accord with my transcendence'.<sup>763</sup> And indeed Merton would agree that the experiential grasp of reality is deeply subjective,<sup>764</sup> and similarly argues that the first person singular, equating to Jaspers' designate Dasein, is not the subject of the experience of Transcendence.<sup>765</sup> But the crucial difference is that Merton proposes that there is an awakening to what is *given*, to the realisation that the *given* is of God.<sup>766</sup>

In these senses Transcendence is intuited as in fact *constituting* contemplative consciousness, as residing within conscious experience in what may be described as a

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<sup>757</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 105.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>760</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 619.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, 638.

<sup>762</sup> T. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1999), 17.

<sup>763</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 112.

<sup>764</sup> T. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 17.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

‘steady’ intuition without tension. And such awareness is apparently more durable than Jaspers would ever admit or tolerate. In deep contemplation the appearance of Transcendence is therefore not necessarily dependent on a transient, ever inaccessible, ever elusive form. There is conjectured to be an inexpressible certitude<sup>767</sup> in contemplative experience that undoubtedly makes ontological commitments which Jaspers would deny are possible. Here is the religious life, as Ricoeur puts it, as the ‘living paradox, but the reconciled paradox, that is to say, the mystery. Who talks *to* God as a Thou can talk *of* God as Transcendence’.<sup>768</sup> Against the claims to a stabilised experience of Transcendence open to contemplative living, Jaspers’ theory is quasi-contemplative. A more durable metaphysic and experiential contact with Transcendence seems possible.<sup>769</sup> And so it is arguable that (iv), Jaspers artificially frames the existential media through which Transcendence is conceived as they are understood not in philosophical language, but in highly specific strands of religious experience and thought. Once again, a more robust relation to Transcendence appears possible than Jaspers’ theory of ciphers is prepared to admit.

Does the secondary critique, positing the overtly evanescent disobjectification of Transcendence, overcome the original affirmation that ciphers describe a humanly useful dynamic? Or to put it in simpler language, does the highly intangible thought of Jaspers disqualify its relevance? Arguably it does not. The Enlightenment project sought to confine religion to the private sphere and ciphers appear to follow the same logic. But although ciphers appear unable to intervene in matters of public rationality, the present thesis, at least, cannot escape the sense in which the existentialist view of existence is right to qualify what may be known rationally and universally and what must rightly be the concern of only an existentially open form of subjectivity. There seems no presently

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<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>768</sup> P. Ricoeur, ‘The Relation of Jaspers’ Philosophy to Religion’, 640.

<sup>769</sup> Further of many such examples can be found in the writing of E. Underhill. In her classic text, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* Underhill suggests that the ‘first term’ of mysticism ‘must be sought in ontology’, the ‘sanction’ of the mystical life ‘does not inhere in the fugitive experiences or even the transformed personality of the subject; but in the metaphysical Object which that subject apprehends’ (See E. Underhill, 1999, viii). Alternatively, the communion of the mystic ‘is always personal in this sense: it is communion with a living Reality, an object of love, capable of response, which demands and receives from them a total self-donation’ (See E. Underhill, 1999, 10).

available way in which the critical cipher dynamic of intuiting and sensing the ‘whole of reality’ in particular situations<sup>770</sup> can be conveyed adequately. But it makes no sense to therefore limit experience to the cannon of disciplined description and reject cipher theory.

The reader might like to consider the following citation from the German philosopher and classical philologist (perhaps appropriately given the reliance of Jaspers and the argumentation of the present chapter on written testimony), F. W. Nietzsche (1844-1900), perhaps in addition to the remarks of Husserl above (fn 443). It is perhaps helpful to think about these deep notions of inspiration, literally an ‘in-breathing’ of reality with this in mind:

If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one, one would hardly be able to set aside the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely medium of overwhelming forces. The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes *visible*, audible, something that shakes and overturns one to the depths, simply describes the fact. One hears, one does not seek; one takes, one does not ask who gives; a thought flashes up like lightening, with necessity, unfalteringly formed – I never had any choice.<sup>771</sup>

In so far as one may legitimately regard an experience of Transcendence in such exalted terms, then the inability to adequately describe the experience should not be a deterrent to at least an attempt to do so. It was conjectured in the opening Chapter that there is a mismatch between what we wish to say and the materials we have for saying it (fn 238). Further to this, in the Primary Critique of ciphers the argument turned to an insight established in *Sacramentum Mundi*. Namely that all experience where Transcendence is concerned is of value and interest. It is possible to turn there again. The entry that discusses the notion of ‘meaning’ tellingly refers to the ‘supremely integrating moments beyond all calculation and control, at which lucid meaning dawns’.<sup>772</sup> Ciphers once again

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<sup>770</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 114.

<sup>771</sup> F. W. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*, (London: Penguin, 2003), 22.

<sup>772</sup> Referring to B. Welte, in K. Rahner *et al.*, entry for ‘Meaning’, *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 4, 5-6.



provide an intuitively satisfying way of coping with the depths of existence and the many ways in which meaning is experienced. It is arguably not reasonable to restrict such understanding because it escapes common definable statement. Knowledge is not simply a matter of comprehending objective realities, there is also the incessant impulse to realise more and to hope that the quest will occasionally touch the very life of Transcendence, the 'Being itself, the hidden goal of all our efforts which alone promises final rest'.<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>773</sup> S. Samay, *Reason Revisited*, 35.

## CONCLUSION

'I do not begin at the beginning', commented Jaspers, by asking questions like "What is being?" Before such exalted questions are posed 'I see that I am in a world in which I take my bearings' (p. 6). These orientations begin in the common sense automatisms through which things are recognised either to everyday knowledge or knowledge more or less perfected in the sciences. These various piecemeal findings, the obvious reality of the world tend to get called "physical" (p. 11). Ordinary things of ordinary size confront the question 'what is there'. The first commitment to realism flows from the native existence of reality. There is a world to be known that is critically received and realised within the limited abilities of human sensitivity and cerebration. The first justification of realism stems from experience: there is a way things are and it affects human lives. In the development of science, its success would arguably not be possible without some form of correspondence theory of truth. As Jaspers comments with customary elegance:

to make sense is at the same time to discover sense. The hiddenness of things is removed in the discovery by our soul, and the things themselves, are, so to speak, liberated in this communication...The latent meaning of things is brought to awakening by our consciousness. Things have in themselves the possibility of communicable forms. Their meaning is their manifest essence which gets into the meaning of the words. This is why man may have confidence in the economy of the universe and in his human task, fulfilling instead of destroying it.<sup>774</sup>

Nevertheless, a mismatch was conjectured between the depth of human experience, beyond these basic confrontations with reality, and the ability to describe certain experiences retrospectively, hinting at the possibility that there is more to the world than its straightforward appearance. Axiomatic for the thesis argument is, therefore, the proposal that it is therefore 'undoubtedly true that we often have great difficulty (and by no means only in matters of religion) in giving an adequate account of the events,

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<sup>774</sup> K. Jaspers, 'Reply to my Critics', in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), 787-788.

relationships, and experiences that matter most to us' (p. 26). Likewise, Jaspers advances an existentialist sense of history which 'denotes a certain fullness and sumptuousness of concrete being, which is unique, incomparable, and irreducible to a conceptual scheme'.<sup>775</sup> These 'existential depths' are described by Jaspers and given freedom within his thought. To fail to appreciate these depths and constrain knowledge to demonstrable "book knowledge" is perhaps to be permanently 'threshing out things not vital to the basic questions of our existence' (p. 38).

To pose the schematic in different language, it is the notion of 'Being' that accounts for the 'definite pre-givenness of the things' available to human speculation (p. 39), but these immanent categories known to conscious theorising also stage a further situation for philosophy. Is this objectifiable level of existence all that there is? The innate dissatisfaction with the ordinary level of existence in varied refractory automatisms, presupposed in the human ability to pose the question at all, gives rise to a further dimension. The existential self or *Existenz* therefore arises as a tension within the givenness of the world. It occurs to the existential self embedded in the immediacy of existence that its regular thinking, and even the scientific cognition of reality, is not the same as an existential encounter with, perhaps, the depth of a more encompassing Transcendent Being (p. 56). What is Being? Being which is transcendent is 'that within which every particular horizon is enclosed as in something absolutely comprehensive which is no longer visible as a horizon at all' (p. 61).

But a metaphysic seeking to posit a transcendent source is not imposed on experience. It is permitted to grow out of reality in order to account for the depth of the experience.<sup>776</sup> How is Being to be known? Two particular though stylistically similar methods were presented in their stated aim of demonstrating the presence of Transcendence to ordinary human activity, while rebuffing denials of this claim in view of the fact 'the things doubted by a sceptic are in fact preconditions for the scepticism to make sense. Hence the scepticism is either meaningless or false' (p. 79). However, the approaches of Rahner and

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<sup>775</sup> K. Hoffman, 'The Basic Concepts of Jaspers Philosophy', 103.

<sup>776</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 82.

Lonergan to the special problems posed by the question of Transcendence, whether it can be meaningfully said to be part of an account of 'what is there', subordinate the existential media encountered in experience. Media of crucial relevance to Jaspers and existentialist thought generally. The thesis argues that *actual experience* is more compelling than an analysis of the apparatus necessary to it being an incident in the first place. It invites the reader to consider and enter into such depth as is open to human exploration through an appropriate epistemological stance.

Indeed for Jaspers there is a 'kind of questioning ad infinitum which amounts to empty intellectuality because it lacks an existential impulse. Questioning has its true place for us, and it is boundless in world orientation, but before the cipher it fades' (p. 84). A cipher is any human experience in which Transcendence is fleetingly realised without ever becoming an instance of objective knowledge (p. 93). As such the language of ciphers cannot possibly chime with Enlightenment standards of rationality as they invite a heavily personal, intuitive and participatory hermeneutic. Erring towards a disquieting subjectivity that surrenders philosophy, and in the present argument philosophical theology, to the personal realm, despite the dangers of ciphers degenerating into solipsistic aestheticism, they can be retained because a *polyvalent phenomenon* such as Transcendence theoretically appears to demand a *polymorphic epistemology*. There can be no philosophical monism if 'entities are knowable only through ways that conform to their idiosyncratic structure' (p. 111). Ciphers account for how Transcendence is not necessarily beyond experience and provides a language for how these depth dimensions are realized.

A cipher theory of Transcendence therefore makes a valid contribution to understanding the human relation to the broader and deeper questions of existence, and perhaps provides an important philosophical nuance to contemporary theorising in the science and religion debate. It appears that a leading epistemological strategy pursued by a formerly prominent writer in the field, Arthur Peacocke, lacks sufficient nuance to support its many claims. Of special relevance is the stated desire to approach the question of Transcendence in objective, impersonal and evenly accessible terms. To the existentialist

mindset this is simply a mismatch of approaches. It is a category error. Arguably, then, a cipher theory provides a more telling contribution. Further still, it is striking that the discourse that emanates from scientific research again and again appears to manifest a pattern and language of more than passing resemblance to cipher theory. On numerous occasions human attention focussed on finite existence appears to be luminously transcended by an awareness of encompassing wholeness. Perhaps not surprisingly, the graduation of these experiences into theological repose is a persistent theme. It would be an interesting task to pursue the epistemological force of the apparent experiences in considerably more detail. Notably, it means attending with appropriate epistemological conviction the dense network of values which bind notions of aestheticism and experience, inference and value.

To conclude, it has been observed that Jaspers' philosophy is such a 'personalised statement'<sup>777</sup> that it can only be imitated in practice. Perhaps, then, it is appropriate in arguing for the relevance of cipher theory to explaining the human encounter with Transcendence, and its apparent relevance to science and religion debates, to note that there can be, in the picture of the theory, no easy demonstrations which would satisfy a truly destructive critic. Only the lines of theoretical possibility may be drawn. And the lines, such as they have been presented and examined here lend credence to the conviction that an experiential-phenomenal model of Transcendence has a telling contribution to make. Here, then, are open areas of existence that compel an altogether different approach. There exists a well ordered, self-referential and methodological approach to book-knowledge in codifying the realms of detectable existence. But it may also be possible to venture beyond communicable certainty to a certainty that has its final term and validation only in experience.

There are undoubtedly many further questions and areas of concern that beset a thesis examining rationalism and hermeneutics. But an attempt has been made to balance the focus of attention around a central theme: the argument that a cipher theory of Transcendence appears to provide an intuitive basis for allowing meaning to be fulfilled

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<sup>777</sup> A. M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, 145.

by the depths of existence. Its epistemological reliability, in the present analysis, seems to support the contention that the word “Transcendence” may be spoken in answer to the perennial philosophical question: “What is there?” The present thesis can find no reasons strong enough to distrust their epistemological reliability to the point of discarding completely a cipher theory of Transcendence.

## SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The two main areas of interest:

1. A more developed, argumentative and exacting view of 'realism', specifically as it is developed by M. A. E. Dummett, and of 'aesthetic realism'. Along with a developed view of the counterpositions in relation to both.
2. P. Ricoeur argued that the 'cipher' appears to function as the 'successor to the mediating Logos'.<sup>778</sup> Future research may focus on the role of *mediation* in Jaspers' philosophy, generally, and with regard to this specific context.

Related to (2) are subsidiary areas, which are nonetheless interesting:

3. A developed sense of the role of 'indexicals' in mediation as they relate to the question of the 'unique particulars' cited by Nicholas Lash, and in relation to the notion of discerning transcendent depth within ordinary existence.
4. As a related issue to (3), it has been proposed that spontaneity is 'inextricably implicated in receptivity'.<sup>779</sup> To what extent is intentionality conditioned by the epistemological predispositions of the knower?
5. Jaspers argues that the experience of Transcendence is incommunicable apart from the written record.<sup>780</sup> What is the epistemological nature and status of personal testimony? In this sense, are all ciphers 'auto-veridical'? What is the precise difference between an inference and an experience?
6. If the success or failure of cipher theory in science and religion dialogue rests on the premise of aesthetic realism (1), more attention will need to be given to the role

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<sup>778</sup> P. Ricoeur, 'The Relation of Jaspers' Philosophy to Religion', 639.

<sup>779</sup> J. McDowell, *Mind and World*, (London: HUP, 1994), 87.

<sup>780</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*, 28.

of aesthetics in cognition. Among others, George Steiner comments that the human spirit explores 'possibilities of meaning and of truth that lie outside empirical seizure or proof'.<sup>781</sup> Hence the assertion that in aesthetic appreciation the person is put in touch with transcendent significance. Exactly what is the role of aesthetics in a theory of ciphers?

7. Finally, the question of ontology in mysticism. Jaspers has been seen to sever durable links between the existential self and Transcendence. Is this a viable or necessary approach? The testimony of contemplative consciousness from alternate traditions of experience suggest not.

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<sup>781</sup> G. Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 225.



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